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this step, in the cause of peace.

Nobody believed Khrushchev, of course, but that is not the point. The point is that the availability of that dignifying charade made it psychologically easier for him to climb down. From which we may reasonably infer that if it had not been available to him, Khrushchev might have run more risks, out there on the brink. With that possibility in mind, we can see the United Nations and its ritual stage as significantly increasing humanity's margin of safety.

Van den Haag does not think so. He believes that the United Nations played no part at all in the resolution of the Cuban missile business. He is a literal-minded man and takes no stock in metaphors, symbols, psychological factors and other intangibles. He sees that the UN is a place where charades go on, and concludes from that that it must be a place of no consequence: kid stuff. I think he exaggerates the grown-upness of humanity and of what serves it.

Defenders of the United Nations, like Conrad, are concerned to emphasize the dignity, the worthiness of the United Nations - characteristics denied by its detractors. Up to a point, I agree here with Conrad. It is important that the United Nations be surrounded with notions of dignity. It is a sort of secular shrine, and to be capable of evoking some kind of residual reverence at moments of major crisis is part of its function. If the idea of the dignity of the United Nations did not exist, there would have been nothing for Khrushchev to hold on to, when he most needed it.

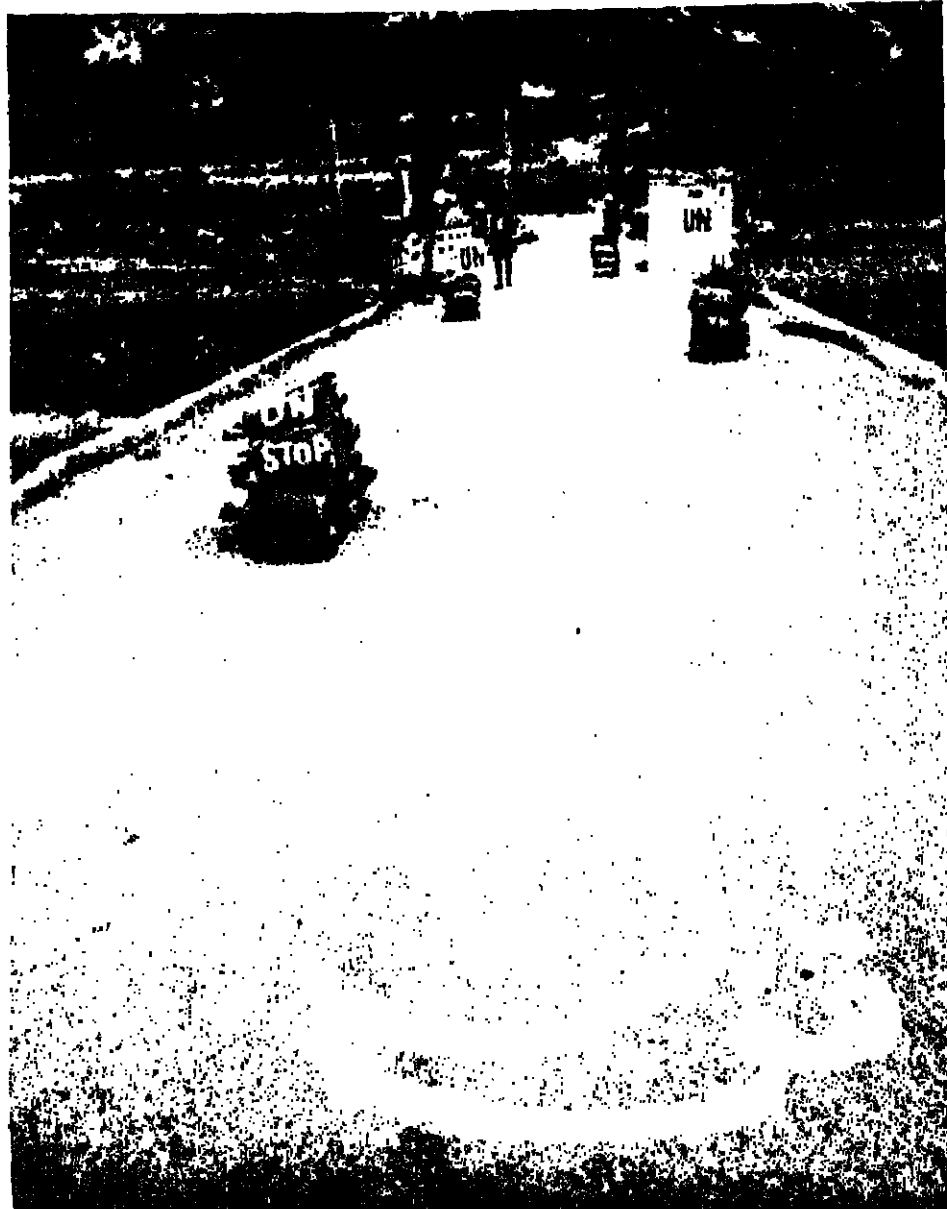
The problem for the United Nations is how to preserve as much as possible of the required dignity, while being in frequent use as the preferred receptacle of so much human indignity. The preservation of peace is inherently an undignified business. Pomp and circumstance are the prerogatives of glorious war. So the avoidance of glorious war has necessarily an element of the inglorious. A major function of the United Nations has been to take unto itself the element of the inglorious, so making the act of climbing down as dignified as possible, for the party needing to move in that direction. But this draws quite heavily on the United Nations' own stores of dignity.

I think few people now attribute much dignity to the United Nations in ordinary circumstances. But at times of major international crisis the hopes and fears - especially the fears - of human beings do tend to invest it with the required dignity, for the duration of the crisis. At such times, the attention of the world turns to the United Nations, as in some sense the spiritual centre of the threatened peace. Whether people know the words of the Preamble or not, its theme is present in their minds: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

The face-saving theatre of the United Nations is more relevant to the adjustment of potential conflicts between the superpowers than it is to conflicts of a lesser order. Of course, basically what keeps the peace between the superpowers is not the United Nations. The primary force that keeps the peace is still the fear of Mutual Assured Destruction. But the theatre of the United Nations, in times of crisis, offers room, and time, and recognized rituals, for that mutual fear to work in. The alarm-bells can be rung; time gained for the size of the danger to sink in to both the main, relevant public; steam can be let off in a controlled rhetorical conflict; while private negotiations are proceeding, time and formulae found to enable both sides to back away a bit, or one side to climb down. And, finally and indispensably, the charade of the saving of face.

All countries have the strongest possible reasons for wanting these procedures to work in the case of the superpowers. And all governments know that they too may, some day, want to make use of similar procedures, in some emergency of their own. As, for example, the Eden government used a UN scenario, in 1956, to get off the hook of Suez.

Those who, like van den Haag, dismiss the United Nations as totally useless, should explain why, none the less, it continues to exist, after nearly forty-three years. No country, even among those which disparage it most, has walked out of it. The United States and Britain



The vandalism of peacekeeping - Akya Bridge, in southern Lebanon, 1978: a photograph from Brian Uppel's book *A Life in Peace and War* (390pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £15.95. 0 297 79213 X), which will be reviewed in a later issue of the TLS.

sound. But Unesco is not something you might need to turn to, or make use of, in an emergency. Unesco is not associated in the public mind with insurance against forces that threaten the survival of the human race. The United Nations is associated with the ideas of emergency and of survival. People disparage it, exploit it, manipulate it, use it to mislead, make a scapegoat of it and a dumping ground; do ev-

A dead man on leave

Christopher Hitchens

KIM DAE JUNG
Prison Writings
333pp. University of California Press. £19.95.
0 520 05482 2

It takes only a slight acquaintance with prison writing to see that the ennobling aspect of the business has been much overdone. Between the extremes - which are probably *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Meln Kampf* - lie vast areas of ambiguity and compromise.

Kim Dae Jung's letters from incarceration are less notable for their content than for the fact of their having been written at all. The author fulfils Eugene Levine's definition of a revolutionary as "a dead man on leave". Having made the cardinal error of coming a close second in a rigged election in his native South Korea, Kim was the target of two government-sponsored assassination attempts. After the brief "Korean spring" of 1980, in which he became the symbol of resurgent but aborted democracy, he was sentenced to death by a military tribunal. Many of these letters date from the period of peril and uncertainty that followed that sentence and pre-dated his five year exile in the United States.

The qualities manifested in these pages are at once recognizable by anybody who has met and talked to the author. Kim Dae Jung is a rather underpompative man, conventionally wedded to the values of a rural upbringing and a "close family". In any properly conducted

everything in fact except altogether give up on it. The United Nations is now, I believe, a permanent institution in the sense that it is likely to last for as long as the human race, and a perceived threat to its survival, both continue to exist. That seems likely to be a long time.

The United Nations I have been discussing here - the symbolical, theatre-of-survival United Nations - is not the kind of organiza-

perhaps an agrarian liberal. Many of his misadventures (which had to be confined to one aerogramme form once a month) show concern for the persecution brought upon his sons by his political outspokenness. Others are preoccupied with the yearning felt by prisoners for the everyday pleasures such as flowers and conversation. Kim is an eclectic, omnivorous reader, forever requesting and recommending books. One list specifies *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, *The Wealth of Nations* and *Gone With the Wind*. It is therefore not so surprising that he repeatedly cites Arnold Toynbee as his intellectual mentor.

Most of the political ideas expressed are rather commonplace. Kim looks forward to mutual Israeli-Palestinian recognition in the Middle East. He stresses the role of history in shaping the Russian character. He points out that prosperity dulls the appeal of Communism. And so forth. Kim regards it as unarguable that a democratic South Korea would be more resolute in the defence of the West. During our conversations in Virginia in 1984 and in Japan and Korea in 1985 he repeatedly showed bewildered disappointment at the stubborn failure of the United States to grasp this elementary point.

I have two criticisms. In his public statements, Kim Dae Jung refrains from making any appeal to the anti-Japanese sentiment that is so easily aroused in Korea (and which is employed without scruple when it suits the allegedly "pro-Western" dictatorship). But in certain places in this collection, he speaks of China and Japan in terms which tread the border between patriotism and chauvinism. This

tion the founders seem to have thought they were founding in 1945. In theory, the Security Council was expected to dispose of overwhelming material force. The Cold War superpower consensus broke down: the Military Staff Committee envisaged in Articles 46 and 47 of the Charter never came into being. So instead of becoming the great supranational force that seems to have been intended, the United Nations took to the stage, for the kinds of performances described above.

Yet a suggestion remains, a possibility of revival, of the other kind of United Nations, the one originally intended. Superpower consensus broke down, in or around 1946, but it never entirely disappeared. The recognition of a basic common interest, at least in avoiding direct conflict between the superpowers, has been steady. Occasionally, there has also been limited consensus on a particular matter. There was limited consensus at the beginning of the Congo operation and a restored limited consensus at the end; the "Independent State of Katanga" ceased to exist as a result of that restored limited consensus, and a brief UN military operation based on it. "The United Nations", when backed by limited and specific superpower consensus, means something quite different from, and more formidable than, "the United Nations" in what has been its normal condition of not being so backed.

The limited and specific consensus embodied in the 1977 arms embargo against South Africa may eventually be seen as foreshadowing further and more drastic action against the apartheid régime (after it itself has entered a more drastically repressive phase). The consensus reflected in the recent Security Council resolution on a cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war could have similar implications for the future in respect of Iran. And if a régime arose which was definitely perceived as obnoxious by both superpowers, the Security Council could find itself, at last, equipped with its Military Staff Committee.

For most purposes, however, I think the United Nations is likely to continue as very much what it has been, almost all of the time: a stage for charades, and a shrine and place of intercession, in times of international emergency. In those capacities I believe it has, on the whole, served humanity well, if oddly. It may have served us better than we can ever know, because we cannot know how things might have turned out - in 1956, for example, or 1962 - if it had not been there.

ly unsettling none the less.

Then again, one cannot begrudge a condemned man his need of religious consolation. Many of these letters take the form of sentimentalized parables, reflecting Kim's dogged Roman Catholicism. But there are moments when he stretches the comparison with his own *Vin Crucis* alarmingly far. And if God has made a special dispensation for Kim Dae Jung, why did he turn aside from the hundreds of poor people shot down in the streets of Kwangju for shouting Kim's name?

I last saw Kim under house arrest and I hope soon to visit him as a freely elected leader. To read this book is to realize the kind of fortitude that may yet make the transition possible.

The SIPRI Yearbook 1987: World Armaments and Disarmament (495pp. Oxford University Press/SIPRI. £32.50. 0 19 8291140), published recently, is the eighteenth annual volume compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Walther Stiltz provides an overview of last year in his introduction "1986 - a year of peace?". This is to be, but it was a year in which "there were 36 armed conflicts around the world, involving roughly 5,500 soldiers from 41 countries." Facts, figures and analysis follow under four general headings: "Weapons and technology"; "Military expenditure, the arms trade and armed conflicts"; "Developments in arms control"; and "Special features", focusing on important subjects which arose during the year, such as the Chernobyl disaster and the question of arms

control. The author examines the way in which Western society has transformed its codes of social closure and compares the Weberian concept of closure with Marxist theories of exploitation, thus marking an important advance in Weberian studies. 0 19 827286 5, 288 pages, Clarendon Press £27.50

Revolutionary positions

Robert Service

VERA BROID

Lenin and the Mensheviks: The persecution of socialists under Bolshevism
216pp. Aldershot: Temple Smith/Gower. £17.50.

0 566 05303 2

PETER BELHARZ

Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Transition to Socialism
197pp. Croom Helm. £25.

0 7099 3995 7

ROBERT C. WILLIAMS

The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and his critics, 1904-1914
233pp. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. £27.50.

0 253 34269 4

A Marxist political party seized power in Petrograd in October 1917. The promise of Lenin and the Bolsheviks quickly to establish a society free from political oppression and economic exploitation was not fulfilled, and the country was plunged into a Civil War which lasted until 1920. Under Joseph Stalin, from the late 1920s, an era of oppression and bloodshed was inaugurated which has few parallels in modern world history.

Some observers have taken Soviet history as an object lesson in the inevitable consequences of the implementation of Marxist ideology. Others maintain that the fault lay not with Marxism but with its malformed Bolshevik variant, and they point in particular to the fact that the Bolsheviks were not the only Marxist party in Russia campaigning for popular favour. The Russian Marxist rivals to the Bolsheviks were the Mensheviks. Like the Bolsheviks, they were a mass party. By late summer they had 200,000 members. The Mensheviks for months after the Romanov monarchy's collapse and the installation of a liberal-dominated Provisional Government had the edge on the Bolsheviks. They held the soviets, and put

the Provisional Government under pressure to modify its domestic and foreign policies to make them more acceptable to working-class opinion. Their leaders were intellectually and organizationally able men and women by most standards. They were willing to give conditional support to the Provisional Government (and from May 1917 to provide Mensheviks as ministerial colleagues to the liberals), because they felt that Russia's economic and cultural level precluded an immediate "transition to socialism", and that military defeat and industrial breakdown were in any case extremely unpropitious circumstances for taking over power. They foresaw the civil war and economic disaster that would result from a socialist take-over and recoiled from such a policy.

Vera Broido, herself a daughter of prominent Mensheviks, describes in *Lenin and the Mensheviks* the awesome price paid by the party for its political inhibitions. On taking power, Lenin persecuted the Mensheviks. Their newspapers were closed, their freedom to contest the elections to the soviets was curtailed. Most of them fought on the Red side in the Civil War against the Whites; but, far from showing gratitude, the Bolsheviks turned on them at the end of the hostilities. Lenin saw them and their policies as his party's most acute threat in peacetime. Mrs Broido, relying heavily upon that excellent newspaper source for Soviet politics, *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, catalogues the dreadful record of imprisonment and physical maltreatment suffered by the surviving Menshevik activists in the 1920s.

If the Mensheviks had not held on to their coalition with the liberals in 1917 but had taken power in their own right along with the Socialist Revolutionaries, the political terror of 1918-20 and of the 1930s would surely not have happened. But it is doubtful that their economic and foreign policies were adequate to the emergency faced by Russia after the monarchy's collapse. Their hope of ending the Great War by getting socialists in Europe to agitate against their governments was naive; and they lacked Lenin's tough-minded *Realpolitik*,

which permitted him to sign a separate peace with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. Menshevik food-supplies policy in 1917, moreover, rested upon a state monopoly of the grain trade; and the peasants deeply resented it. In fact the Mensheviks later recognized the need for the introduction of private trade in grain if ever the towns were to get adequately fed. But they did not say this in 1917 when they had belonged to the Provisional Government. In any case, there would have been dreadful material hardship in Russia in 1918 whether the government had been liberal, Menshevik or Bolshevik. The Bolsheviks would have unscrupulously exploited their propaganda chances against a Menshevik administration; and, unlike the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks would not have had the ruthlessness to suppress their critics.

Another approach taken by historians to the October Revolution has been to suggest that the horrors of post-October Russia occurred because the wrong Bolsheviks came to the top of the Bolshevik party. The prime exponent of this interpretation was Trotsky. Throughout his writings after 1923 he claimed that "Lenin's epigones", such as Stalin, grossly distorted Bolshevism. It was not Bolshevism but Stalin's variant of Bolshevism that was malformed.

Peter Belharz's *Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Transition to Socialism* focuses on aspects of Trotskyist theory which, both expressly and by implication, legitimated authoritarianism. Trotsky's autobiographical works paraded a commitment to democracy inside the party. He was a brilliant apologist *pro vita sua*, but tended to play down his oppressive activity in the Civil War and his bloodthirsty approval of terror. Trotsky is sometimes regarded as a libertarian of sorts by far-left socialists in the West. Admittedly he called for a restoration of democracy in the party from 1923; but it was no coincidence that this call was uttered only after he had lost much of his new power there. Beforehand he had done as much as anyone to suppress intra-party democracy. Belharz's account, which takes in Isaac Deutscher and

Ernest Mandel along with a string of Trotsky's later followers, exposes their persistent failure to correct the faults of the original authoritarian vision.

Trotsky, of course, came late to Bolshevism; until 1917 he was an opponent of the Bolshevik faction, and many arguments elaborated against Lenin came from him - much to his embarrassment in the 1920s and 1930s when events compelled him to portray himself as more Leninist than his Bolshevik rivals. Trotsky and Stalin perpetually castigated each other as being anti-Bolshevik.

Yet they at least agreed that Bolshevism was coherent and easily defined. In the past few years several scholars, especially in Britain and the United States, have cast doubt on this assumption. The disputes among the Bolsheviks from the Russian "revolution" of 1905-6 through to the First World War have attracted most attention. At times Aleksandr Bogdanov had greater practical and ideological influence over the Bolshevik faction than did Lenin. Bogdanov's comrades included some outstanding Bolsheviks, and Robert C. Williams's book devotes attention both to him and to V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich, L. B. Krasin, A. M. Gorky and A. V. Lunacharsky. He emphasizes the libertarian side of their thought. His chapters, characterized by much new material and a pleasantly discursive style, make the case that these other Bolsheviks favoured a kind of politics alien to Lenin. Thus they advocated collectivism and mass action whereas he aimed at a hierarchically organized party obedient to a single leader. No student of the Bolshevik party will fail to learn something from this book.

But its analysis is only partly convincing. Professor Williams asserts that the Bogdanovists were really syndicalists, and that it was because syndicalism was a dirty word among Marxists that they omitted to acknowledge this in public. Consequently the disputes between Lenin and Bogdanov were supposedly undertaken in "Aesopian" language. This is surely taking things too far; Bogdanov, challenged

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Reconstructing from above

Archie Brown

ROBERT C. TUCKER
Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet
Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev
214pp. Brighton: Wheatsheaf. £29.95.
0745043583
HANS-JOACHIM VEEN (Editor)
From Brezhnev to Gorbachev: Domestic
affairs and Soviet foreign policy
378pp. Leamington Spa: Berg. £27.
0854965017

Two themes have dominated the writing of Robert C. Tucker, who has long been one of the most perceptive American writers on Soviet history and politics: leadership and political culture. In his latest book he has brought his major interests together in a fine collection of essays. Most of them have been published before, but the last two are both new (written in 1987, so this is good work by the publisher also) and highly relevant to an understanding of the contemporary Soviet political scene.

One of the strands of continuity in *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev* is the theme of "revolution from above". It was Stalin who carried this process to its furthest extreme. As a result of his efforts, he decided that by the mid-1930s the Soviet Union had become "socialist", though, as Tucker mildly observes, "it differed in various vital ways from what most socialist thinkers... had understood socialism to mean". It was

a socialism of mass poverty rather than plenty, of sharp social stratification rather than relative equality, of universal constant fear rather than emancipation of personality, of Russian chauvinism rather than brotherhood of man, and of a monstrously hypertrophied state power rather than the decreasingly statified commune-state delineated by Marx in *The Civil War in France* and by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*.

If Stalin's tyranny owed much to his own psychological predisposition (and a projected



Rudchenko's poster for the Leningrad State Publishers, 1925, is reproduced from *Soviet Commercial Design of the Twenties* edited by M. Anikst (144pp. Thames and Hudson. £22.50. 0 500 73504 X).

three-volume "psycho-history" of Stalin is the major work on which Tucker has been engaged over the past fifteen years), it was nevertheless within a tradition of revolution from above of which Stalin was very conscious. It had earlier taken a Leninist form, but it had deeper roots in the Russian past. Stalin's cultural revolution was, in fact, a powerful synthesis of the old and the new.

It is one of Tucker's theses that it will take another cultural revolution – or, at any rate, significant political-cultural as well as institutional change – if the reformers who have achieved prominence in the contemporary Soviet Union are to have any chance of more than passing success. Indeed, the more substantial of his two entirely new chapters is entitled "To Change a Political Culture: Gorbachev and the fight for Soviet reform". When Gorbachev equated the word *perestroika* (reconstruction) with "revolution", it was, argues Tucker, a new cultural revolution – not in Stalin's or Mao's destructive conception but "in the sense of a fundamental transformation of a great many customary Soviet ways of acting and thinking" – that he had in mind.

The very conflict "between exponents of new ways and defenders of the old ones" apparent in the contemporary Soviet Union is, for Tucker, crucial evidence that the society is "in the throes of cultural change". Noting, as other observers have done, the strength of the forces of inertia and resistance, Tucker acknowledges the magnitude of the task facing the reform wing of the current leadership. He rejects, however, the dogmatic view that they "will never succeed in the fight for reform", remarking that four decades of being a Russia-watcher have taught him that "where Russia is concerned, one must never say never".

In contrast with Robert Tucker's broad

sweep over Soviet and Russian history and his coherent approach, Hans-Joachim Veen's *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev* is narrower in time-span than even its title suggests, disparate in outlook and of somewhat uneven quality. It is very much a conference volume, and only a minority of contributors have updated the papers they presented at a conference in Germany in 1984 to cover the Gorbachev era.

Ideological change as well as change in personnel has been sufficiently swift under Gorbachev to make even one of the best chapters in the collection, that of Jacques Rupnik, "Soviet Ideology: From the end of Utopia to 'real socialism'", look surprisingly out of date for a piece apparently written in 1983. Though he rightly points to some of the theoretical roots of the present ideology of reform, the attention he pays to the conservative doctrine of "developed socialism" merely serves as a reminder of the extent to which that complacent catch-phrase of the Brezhnev era has disappeared from view under Gorbachev. What underlies Gorbachev's emphasis on the need for "reconstruction" and "radical reform" is his judgment of how very undeveloped in a great many respects Soviet-style socialism is.

If Veen had given his book the title *From Andropov to Chernenko* it would have fitted the contents very well and one would have willingly recognized that it contained a lot of useful detail and some interesting analysis of that period of less than two-and-a-half-years. Putting Gorbachev in the title may have pleased his publisher, but it is bound to leave the reader dissatisfied. Though brought out in 1987, the book has nothing illuminating to say about the period since March 1985. There is now a new political agenda in the Soviet Union. Whether it will be implemented is one of the more important questions of our age.

Corridors

Disorientation, loss: the doors that close just when you think that you have gained your entrance. A glimpse of hallway, hat-rack, mirror, more doors. Beyond the doors and on the left perhaps a window giving on to a neat yard with trees and flowers. Straight ahead of you a lift-cage dressed in iron broderie, a smelt of coffee brewing, an envelope slit like a wound, the darker recesses of sitting-rooms, momentarily opened. What troubles me is the uncertainty: is this really a valuable darkness, or am I part of the darkness that's locked out?

Odd thoughts on a train without a window whose being is an endless corridor as long as Europe, on which I should find who else but you in an adjacent carriage.

GEOFFREY

An involving imagination

Brigid Brophy

NINA AUERBACH
Ellen Terry: Player in her time
504pp. Dent. £17.50.
046070177

The letters of Ellen Terry, her new biographer says, "bring us as close as we can come to the actress's own voice". That is not so, marvels though many of her letters are. By discontinuing the styluses and machines that play 78 rpm discs, capitalism has plunged Britain into much the condition of the island in *The Tempest* before the first human incursion. Dozens of spirits are imprisoned in trees or at least in record cabinets. I do not suppose I am the only person with a copy of HMV's single-sided disc numbered 2-3535, even though, without the help of some Prospero, I can no longer release its sound-track – which is Ellen Terry's recitation of Portia's "The quality of mercy" speech.

Her speaking voice is of middle pitch. Her accent is "standard English". She speaks fast but her articulation crisply separates word from word. Bernard Shaw, whose own excellent articulation served him well in public speaking, described Ellen Terry's as "perfect" and likened her to Queen Victoria, "one of the most perfect speakers of her day".

The new biography does not know that its subject's voice is recorded, though a "Chronology" at the back logs, under 1916-22, her appearance in "five forgettable films". From the dates I assume they are silent. As a matter of fact, Shaw met her by chance "in the country near Elstree" while one of her films was being shot. He describes the meeting ("She was astonishingly beautiful") in his preface to their published correspondence.

As he points out there, she was never stage-struck. Children of travelling actors, she and her elder sister, Kate, who also became a star, were born into their profession. Ellen's literal birth was in lodgings at Coventry in, she and

Shaw believed, 1848. After her death Roger Manvell established that her true year of birth was 1847. She was always a year older than she thought, said and wrote that she was; it is one of the rare points where her autobiography cannot steer a later biographer. Nina Auerbach fills in with a conjecture that her father made a deliberate mistake in order to smooth her transition from juvenile trouser roles to womanly roles. How early in her babyhood he foresaw the need and whether he did the same kindness for his elder daughter, with the result that Kate Terry's date of birth is erroneous too, the conjecture does not explore.

Earning her own living from childhood and free from the hypocrisies of dependence, Ellen Terry became one of the least Victorian of Victorians. She left the theatre without regrets when, in 1864, she married her senior by thirty years, the painter and sculptor George Frederick Watts (whose middle name this book docks of the final k many authorities accord it). The paintings for which she sat to him made her "interesting and singular", being known to Shaw before he arrived in London and saw her on the stage. Yet within a year of the marriage Watts returned her like an unsatisfactory mail order. She went briefly back to the theatre but quit it again when she set up house with the architect and designer E. W. Godwin, to whom she bore her two children, Edith and Gordon. The household split apart. She resumed acting, secured divorce from Watts and married the man who played Benedict to her first Beatrice. He meant to give his surname to her children, but Craig, the surname under which they as adults acted, produced and wrote, was appropriated, by Edith, from a Scottish landmark. Ellen Terry became the regular co-star of Henry Irving in the puppet plays and grand but textually mutilated productions of Shakespeare he mounted at the Lyceum in London.

Her gift was her imagination. On stage it sometimes went walkabout, leading her to

fidget or forget her lines. She made on Shaw, at his first sight of her, "an impression of waywardness: of not quite fitting into her part and not wanting to". Her imagination entwined with that of gifted people who painted, photographed or produced her, J. S. Sargent portrayed her as the Lyceum Lady Macbeth raising a crown and about to crown herself. The incident is not in the text and was not in Irving's production. Sargent invented it. The picture is his vision of her.

Shaw sought both Lyceum talents for the Ibsenite-Shavian revolution. Irving, whose decades of triumph at that theatre made him in 1895 the first knighted actor, was probably too addicted to his near-hypnotic command of the audience – as a talisman of which he had taken his stage surname from that of a pulpist spellbinder, and in the image of which, I have conjectured in print and this book does now, his business manager, Bram Stoker, fictionalized him as Dracula. Neither was Ellen Terry won for theatrical revolution. Not wholly against her will, she was in thrall to Irving. Shaw could not enlist her to campaign against the moral claustrophobia of middle-class society, because she had never experienced it.

Shaw wrote a one-act masterpiece, *The Man of Destiny*. The role of the Strange Lady in it is so exactly tailored for her that it brings the reader close not only to Ellen Terry's voice but to her stage presence, occasional absences of mind included. The play's action is designed to demonstrate to Ellen Terry how, by boldness and intelligence, she could outwit the forcefulness of Napoleon – or Irving. Irving took an option but did not put on the play. Ellen Terry did not act Shaw until, after Irving's death and the death of her second husband, she undertook Lady Cicely Wayneslette in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, a play written for her. At the first rehearsal Shaw witnessed her first meeting with the North American actor cast for an American role. She "put him in her pocket" and made him her third husband. He was as much her junior as she had been her first

husband's.

Ellen Terry: Player in her time is overlaid with facts. The author has amassed them conscientiously and proffers them with a certain elfin sprightliness. The volume would be less bulky had she jettisoned her redactions of other scholars' works on social and theatrical history and devised a stowage plan that avoided repetitions. Chugging under the Dent flag of convenience, the book is manufactured in the United States and written in the North American language. Occasionally the discourse runs into ambiguity. When it reports that Ellen Terry hung two photographs of Eleonora Duse "as self-reproachful icons", the reader must guess which actress the author considers the self who reproached herself. Professor Auerbach seems to have discovered a new secondary sex characteristic when she writes that "men lacked the breasts and white shoulders women displayed".

In 1988, when Ellen Terry will be sixty years dead, the publishers should make an attractive commemorative book by reproducing the illustrations in this biography in bolder and bigger format with more telling captions. Some publisher will, I devoutly wish, reissue the correspondence between Ellen Terry and Shaw in the excellent 1931 edition by Christopher St John, the transvestite literary name of the woman who was Edith Craig's last lover. Shaw's twenty-nine-page preface, the work of an expert writer, gives a more vivid, comprehensive and analytical account of the European theatre in the second half of the nineteenth century than Nina Auerbach's monster heap provides. Pointing the reader's way towards the letters he is introducing, Shaw ends his preface with one of the most moving sentences in the corpus of English prose, his tribute to literature, as Dubedat's creed is to painting, and his memorial to Ellen Terry: "Let those who may complain that it was all on paper remember that only on paper has humanity yet achieved glory, beauty, truth, knowledge, virtue and abiding love."

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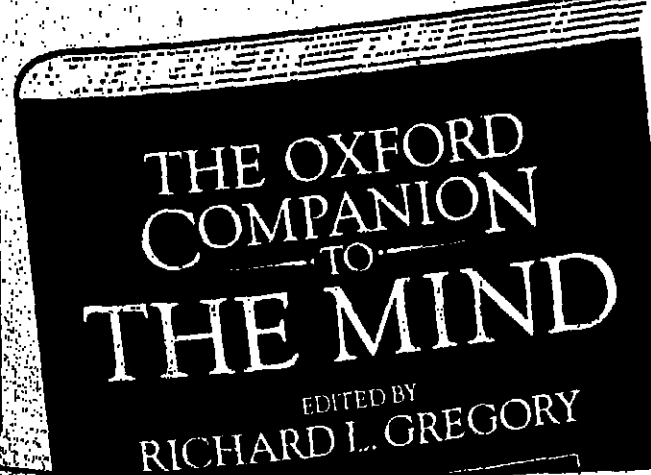
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Undertones of war

David Nokes

PARK HONAN
Jane Austen: Her life
452pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95.
0127 792172
BRIAN SOUTHAM (Editor)
Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage
Volume Two: 1870-1940
308pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £18.
0710210183

Gentle as he was, he would live in stench. Men and officers untrained and defeated on deck . . . In mornings at sea, deck gratings were looked upon. You faced the gratings with tied wrists as Housin's mates flogged your back into fiery pulp. Twenty lashes for minor naval infractions were common; fifty exposed your bones. When three sailors were sentenced to 400, 500 and 600 lashes in the harbour, mates flogged at upright corpses.

Park Honan's new biography of Jane Austen opens with a violent bravura prelude describing her brother Frank's life as a naval officer. The intention evidently is to deliver a short, sharp shock to any cosy notion that the Austens enjoyed a calm, sequestered existence, sheltered from life's harsher realities. Instead of the familiar miniature's perspective, the celebrated "little bit of ivory (two inches wide)" depicting "3 or 4 families in a country village", Honan paints an epic canvas, full of violent details and lurid colours. Jane Austen's world, as he presents it, includes criminals and prostitutes, slavery and sodomy, war and revolution. Her novels, he reminds us, were written in wartime, and beneath their genteel ironies he detects disturbing indications of "despair, violence and anarchy". Chawton, where the majority of the novels were written, is presented not as a sleepy Hampshire village, but as a busy strategic centre; placed at "a vital junction of the Winchester, London and Gosport roads", it is "almost a racecourse", on the direct route to centres of "pulsing activity".

Justifying the appearance of yet another biography of Jane Austen, Honan claims that "no biographer has taken account of a wealth of Austen family manuscripts" that has "turned up" since the publication of W. and R. A. Austen-Leigh's *Life and Letters* in 1913. Most of the new material presented here, however, relates not to Jane Austen but to other members of the family.

Honan's study of Jane's father's accounts at Hoare's bank convinces him that the family lived "in the shadow of hard poverty". Jane's brother Edward was "given away" to rich, childless relations in Kent, leaving Jane with a "horror of adoptions" which surfaces in Fanny Price's sufferings in *Mansfield Park*. A distant,

extra-marital kinship with Warren Hastings brought the family into contact with a murky world of colonial patronage and corruption. Undismayed by the scandal surrounding his long-running trial, Jane's father exploited the Hastings connection to further her brother Frank's career. "We may say now, for the first time," Honan declares, "that Frank sailed on the *Perseverance* with secret extraordinary directions from Hastings's friends in the East India Company." Frank's naval career, as Honan depicts it, provided his sister with knowledge not only of sodomy and the lash, but also of shady freebooting activities involving silver bullet and opium. Still more disturbing, the comte de Feuillide, husband of Jane's cousin Eliza, was guillotined during the Terror in France, having attempted to save himself by claiming to be only a poor servant who had murdered the real count. Even genteel Bath



Richard Carlbold's drawing is reproduced from Barbara Johnson's *Album of Fashions and Fabrics* (208pp. Thames and Hudson. £5.0/5.00/14/19/1) edited by Nathalie Rohatzer.

was no safe haven for her. It was there, Honan reminds us, that her snobbish aunt Leigh-Perrot was charged with the capital offence of stealing a piece of lace, and held in prison for seven months.

Readers who find something melodramatic in this picture of Jane Austen's world will be equally dismayed by Honan's readings of the novels. Just as he discerns the shadows of crime and corruption overhanging her peaceful country life, so he detects the rumble of revolution beneath her ordered prose. Analysing the presentation of Bath in *Northanger Abbey*, he

writes: "This is nearly the world of Engels or Walter Benjamin." He finds the description of Highbury in *Emma* so authentic that "we might imagine here the rich-burnings and riots that lay just ahead for rural villages". According to Honan, Knightley's disparaging comment on Frank Churchill ("he can be amiable only in French, not in English") "indirectly points to the recent French spectre of *la Terreur*".

When not straining to produce these violent conclusions, Honan's style is evocative, fluent and perceptive. His imaginative recreation of Jane Austen's childhood at Steventon rectory, with its narrow rooms, its cellar that regularly flooded, and its patchwork of cracked and exposed rafters, is beautifully done. Often his descriptions have a novelist's sensitivity. He describes the Hampshire downs "shining bronze and white-flecked" and captures the bustle and excitement of a ball.

One courtseyed this way and that. There might be a tea or a light supper, along with the horrible fuss and scramble of getting oneself engaged for country dances to come, and finally one might follow the sound of violins into the brilliancy of an ornate and full ballroom . . .

Most importantly, his intuitive presentation of Jane Austen's private thoughts is usually both intelligent and persuasive. His description of the state of her mind during the night of December 2, 1802, after having first accepted Harriet Smith's proposal of marriage and before rejecting it the next day, fills five pages of sensitive analysis without a single false note. But elsewhere the persistent detection of vio-

lent undertones to her witty remarks seems exaggerated. "Her gaiety of temperament conflicted with a fury and spleen, a rage of protest", he asserts. Honan frequently invokes comparisons with Shakespeare. In *Sense and Sensibility* he finds echoes of *King Lear*; *Pride and Prejudice* recalls *Romeo and Juliet* and *Mansfield Park* has affinities with *Henry VIII*. Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* is said to be "like Cordelia and Ophelia". Such comparisons are not merely an assertion of Austen's literary status, though Honan concludes the book by declaring grandly "her works have become tests of truth in Western culture, refreshing and clarifying us as deeply as Dante, Cervantes or Shakespeare may". More particularly these analogies are used to suggest a latent tragic intensity behind Jane Austen's wit.

Honan usually includes, within his own critical commentaries on the novels, a conspectus of contemporary critical opinions. A broader survey of readers' reactions to Austen's works is provided by the second volume of the Critical Heritage anthology which traces the steady rise in her reputation from 1870 to 1940. Here is Mark Twain fuming "her books madden me so that I can't conceal my frenzy" and George Moore commenting snidely on her "maiden lady realism". "She shocks me", Auden wrote in 1937, feigning surprise that "An English spinster of the middle class" should so openly "Describe the amorous effects of 'brass'". Park Honan's portrait of Jane Austen presents a woman more shocking and less shockable than any of these would recognize.

Room for improvement

Pat Raine

ELIZA HAYWOOD
The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless
594pp. Paperback, £5.95.
086358 0904
MRS OFE
Adeline Mowbray, or, The Mother and Daughter
275pp. Paperback, £4.95.
086358 0858
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Patronage
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086358 1048
Pandora.

Pandora's Mothers of the Novel series continues with reprints of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century works, the earliest being Eliza Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), in which an amiable heroine has the thoughtlessness ironed out of her in a long succession of scrapes and misunderstandings. The theme of character-moulding (soon to become a staple of authors writing for children) is here given a playful and sprightly piling. With *Adeline Mowbray*, by Mrs Ofe, we are brought up to 1804 and shown the unlooked-for effects of a "rational" upbringing. The author, among other things, is taking a swipe at insincere professors of advanced views: Mrs Mowbray's free-thinking flies out of the window when her daughter applies at least one of its tenets to her own life. It's a fit subject for dril treatment; however, in Mrs Ofe's hands, much over-writing and affectation find their way into it.

Like Eliza Haywood, Mary Brunton is out to show that discipline works for its subject's own good. Her novel *Discipline* (1815) has a heroine, Ellen Perry ("proud, petulant, and religious"), whose character is nearly fatally warped by an absence of proper curbing in childhood. It takes a good many misadventures, including incarceration in a Scottish lunatic asylum, to bring Ellen to a redeemable state. An agreeable earnestness keeps the book from being unduly didactic.

Patronage (1814), by Maria Edgeworth, is one of those novels devised to illustrate some moral precept (at considerable length) - more than 600 pages devoted to showing that it is better to prosper by your own efforts than to rely on the good offices of a patron. Helen (1834) was Edgeworth's last novel, and, says Maggie Gee in her introduction, it seems "less interested in moral issues . . . and more interested in psychology", though it still has a good deal to say about women's efforts to ingratiate themselves at the expense of honesty. There is much of incidental interest in all these novels (not least the light they cast on the customs and assumptions of the time, as the introductions are at pains to point out), and it is good to see them in print; only one, though - *Betsy Thoughtless* - is written with unqualified voice and lightness of touch.

James Austen-Leigh's biography of his aunt Jane Austen has been out of print since 1926. Captain Hutchinson have just reissued it with a new introduction by Fay Weldon. *Memoir of Jane Austen* (235pp. Paperback, £4.95, 0 7126 31702 7) was written fifty years after Austen's death and includes a discarded chapter of *Persuasion* and extracts from the unfinished *Sanditon*.

Talking among themselves

Chris Baldick

PAUL DE MAN
The Resistance to Theory
137pp. Manchester University Press.
£27.50 (paperback, £7.50).
07190 19109
THOMAS MCFARLAND
Shapes of Culture
187pp. Iowa City: Iowa University Press.
£22.50.
08745 1621
GERALD GRAFF
Professing Literature: An institutional history
315pp. Chicago University Press. £19.95.
0266 30603 8
GILES GUNN
The Culture of Criticism and the Criticism of Culture
216pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50.
019 5041615
PATRICK PARRINDER
The Failure of Theory: Essays on criticism and contemporary fiction
225pp. Brighton: Harvester. £28.50.
07108 11292
FREDERICK CREWS
Skeptical Engagements
244pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
019 5039505
MAREK SALSINSZKY
Criticism in Society: Interviews with Jacques Derrida, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom et al
24pp. Methuen. £15.
0416 92270 8
MALCOLM BRADBURY
Mimesis: Structuralism's hidden hero
104pp. Deutsch. £5.95.
0233 980202

Between literary theorists and anti-theorists, and within the theorists' camp itself, the disagreements are no longer questions of whether they can agree but of whether they can even disagree. Since the assaults upon the stability of authors and texts as repositories of meaning, it seems that schools of literary critics have no common ground left between them and are falling away centrifugally into mutually incomprehensible salons, each conducting dazzling conversations in a patois which automatically excludes all the others. The grand scientific ambition of High Theory in the 1960s and 70s seems to have been a Babel whose former builders have since set up refugee colonies referred to by Stanley Fish some years ago as "interpretive communities". In Fish's account of criticism there were no longer objectively any texts against which various interpretations could demonstrably test themselves and each other; and since it was the interpretations which produced the "texts", not the other way round, no interpretation could be other than self-validating, a circular reaffirmation of the assumptions already held by the interpreter's own community.

This model - more a ratification than a hypothesis - offers what seems at first an attractively indulgent and pacific licence: each school can have its own way with a text, so long as it doesn't frighten the horses. Yet, as both Patrick Parrinder and Frederick Crews point out in their quarrel with contemporary theory, such a dead-end of pluralism is worse than merely inert, because it rules out any kind of productive debate, disagreement, or even change of opinion. In this fashion the apparent open-endedness of textual "indeterminacy" leads to the closing down of any critical forum and the elimination of any common criteria of evidence, judgment, or relevance. The blossoming of abstruse vocabularies in criticism is only one visible symptom of this closing of frontiers; a more profound involution is at the highest caste of theoreticians is prepared to address. The late Paul de Man, once the mandarin with the longest fingernails, evolved an elegant reason for confining the arguments about literary theory to a self-selecting community: the title essay of his posthumous collection *The Resistance to Theory* proposes that "The real debate of literary theory is not with its polemical opponents but rather with its own methodological assumptions and possibilities." Theory can carry on talking to itself because it is always already self-resisting; to the extent of becoming at its most rigorous "the

universal theory of the impossibility of theory". Accordingly, the only figures worth arguing with are those who are closest to de Man's own position: Michael Riffaterre, A. J. Greimas and H. R. Jauss, although the ghosts of Hegel, Benjamin and Bakhtin are allowed to join the conversation.

De Man's claim that theory is always already its own best enemy repeats exactly the more familiar "turn" in which he announced that literary texts were already deconstructing themselves before the deconstructionists even got to them. The turn is an inward one, but paradoxically objectivist too: unlike the "free-wheeling" deconstructors, de Man maintained that there was a truth, the only catch being that this truth - the figurative abyss at the heart of language - was one which disintegrated all other truths whatever. The result is not just a drastic exclusiveness in which no non-tropological account of literature deserves to be called reading (until Derrida, "French critics never bothered to read at all"); de Manian Deconstruction is also left with only one thing to say, condemned like the Ancient Mariner to repeat it. Each of the writers with whom he takes issue is expelled from the reading-room for evading the figurative basis of language and for favouring grammar or hermeneutics (in short, aesthetics) over poetics. These essays would be much briefer were it not for de Man's impeccable good manners: his tone is severe and Olympian but he allows his adversaries the benefit of a gracious, almost aristocratic protocol as he escorts them to the door. Only once does he stop to notice the basis of his elite discourse: the fact that in the United States a professor of de Man's rank only teaches his or her own future colleagues.

The resulting insulation of theorists in their specialist echo-chamber is an example of what Thomas McFarland in *Shapes of Culture* sees as the collapse of cultural forms into disconnected "shapes". Once, a Leibniz could understand the latest developments in several arts and sciences; now, most literary scholars know no science and can hardly keep up with the work in their own restricted fields. "The encyclopedias record more facts . . . but individuals know proportionately less and less." Things fall apart, leaving only a cultural chaos of shapes "which float, bobbles, in our group awareness". McFarland's taste for metaphors of viscosity is almost Sartrean, but his reaction to blobs and globules is far from being one of nauseous revulsion. On the contrary, he sports a decadent nonchalance, serenely accepting the collapse of knowledge, which was a vain endeavour to begin with. Transcendental truth comes in experiential blobs rather than in systems of knowledge, as McFarland can report, having been one of the very few blessed with the gift of untranslatable epiphanies or Wordsworthian visionary gleams. Tranquilly recollecting such blobs of time, he can afford to abandon all connected forms of culture from chronology to logic while he crawls back into the shell of Romantic individualism: "shapes, validated by the privacy and certainty of individual experience, rather than forms, proffered by the group and its collective mythology, are now becoming, and henceforth will increasingly be, the true bearers of culture". Such a thoroughgoing privatization of culture reminds one less of Wordsworth than of Ira Gershwin's deathless lines, "Who cares if banks fail in Yonkers / Long as you gotta kiss that conquester".

Those of us unvisited by transcendental visions, however, just have to struggle along by trying to understand the secular world. Gerald Graff, who appears to belong to this class, and who is among the most perceptive observers of modern literary criticism, offers a far more satisfying account of the disconnections which beset critics and scholars. In *Professing Literature* he has undertaken a search for those institutional pressures and inertias which have generated the complex pattern of hostilities now entrenched between professors of literature. He has evidently spent many months trawling through old Modern Language Association presidential addresses, professorial memoirs and college reminiscences, and the fruit of his labour is a solidly researched and convincingly argued work. Although Graff ventures too infrequently outside the campus, his fascinating account of the literary academy in the United States from the 1840s to the

present day avoids inconsequential gossip and keeps its most pressing arguments continuously and persuasively before the reader's attention. There is much to admire in the way that Graff captures the ethos of the early colleges, and as he traces the growth of research and of literary history, he ranges widely from the absurd (Professor Hiram Corson's seances with the ghosts of Tennyson and Browning) to the sinister (the ingrained antisemitism of the English departments). These early chapters are remarkably lucid in following the emergence of the warfare between scholars and critics, but the real excitement comes in the second half of the book as Graff warms to his more familiar theme of New Criticism and its successors. He has several significant corrections to make to the received view of the New Critics - notably on their changing conceptions of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in literary analysis; and his careful analysis of this period sheds much light on later theorists.

Like the New Critic's prior knowledge that all literature is paradoxical, the deconstructionists' foreknowledge that all texts are allegories of their own unreadability . . . is made suspect by its monotonous universality of application . . . Since such vertigo long ago became a respected cultural value, the exposure of its presence (or its absent traces) in a text functions as organic readings once did to normalize the text and render it a supercomplex object, immune to criticism.

One of the many benefits of a historical view such as Graff's is that it discovers some unsettling ironies behind the slogans and banners of today's battleground. What is now regarded as humanist scholarship, for instance, was denounced by a previous generation of humanists as a jargon-ridden and anti-literary campaign of subversion, whereas the poststructuralists are in many ways more authentically traditional than those self-styled traditionalists who believe that literature teaches itself without theory. Graff's polemics, though, are directed chiefly against the departmental "field-coverage" system of intellectual *laissez-faire* which has muffled the challenge of American studies yesterday and women's studies today by burying them in disconnected courses. Specialism is inevitable, he maintains, but the system of "silent trade-offs" which ensures that our most instructive disagreements are never aired *devant les enfants* is not. Graff is arguing, in effect, against the institutionalized pluralism of literary studies, in favour of a plurality nourished by its disagreements.

The need for a new dialogue to replace our theoretical monologues is being felt in many quarters, and it helps to account for the strong interest in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin in the past few years. Giles Gunn devotes a chapter of *The Culture of Criticism* and the *Criticism of Culture* to Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, finding in the Russian theorist an invigorating sense of "alterity" or otherness which can show us a way out of the vices of theoretical closure and solipsism. Gunn sets out as well to recover the lost dimension of "the moral imagination" by investigating the pragmatism of Kenneth Burke and the anthropology of Clifford Geertz; but his exploration gets nowhere in particular, perhaps because the apparently religious sense in which he conceives of alterity will not admit of clear formulation. There is much beating about the bush in this book, and very little clarification of the issues with which it struggles; it is one of those works which prove only that its author has been doing some strenuous thinking on difficult matters.

Reconstructing the basis of a literary debate of the kind that Gunn and Graff envisage will require some common agreement on ground-rules and standing orders. The opponents of current theory complain, however, that it is precisely such a possibility that has been precluded by the new schools' extravagantly anti-empirical principles. Patrick Parrinder's *The Failure of Theory* and Frederick Crews's *Skeptical Engagements* both address this problem; each in a different manner not accurately indicated by its title (they should have swapped these). Parrinder's essays do not add up to a settling of accounts with the claims of contemporary theory: most of them are quietly perceptive studies of British authors from Orwell to B. S. Johnson, the best of them being a withering assessment of Doris Lessing's irrationalist rationalism in her scarily elitist flying-saucer fantasies. Where this book does touch upon theory it is with a firm but polite insistence that the universalizing pretensions of the theoreticians are unfounded, since they have failed to allow for the irrational, the experiential and the intuitive. Parrinder's objection is less to the rarefaction of deconstructive theory (whose free-wheelers he honours as "brilliant gaddies") than to a codified "new dogmatics of reading" which inconsistently exempts itself from the strictures it places upon creative writers. His critical ideal is that of Socratic questioning and (once again) debate; which is no

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This book is the first to break South Africa's censorship barrier and reveal the growing strength of the African National Congress - apartheid's guerrilla rebels. Filled with crucial new information about such issues as the involvement of communists in the ANC, the ANC's military strategy, and the weakness of the South African government forces in battling resistance, this is an indispensable guide to what Pretoria does not want the West - or its own people - to know. 272pp. Cloth £18.95 Paper £8.95.

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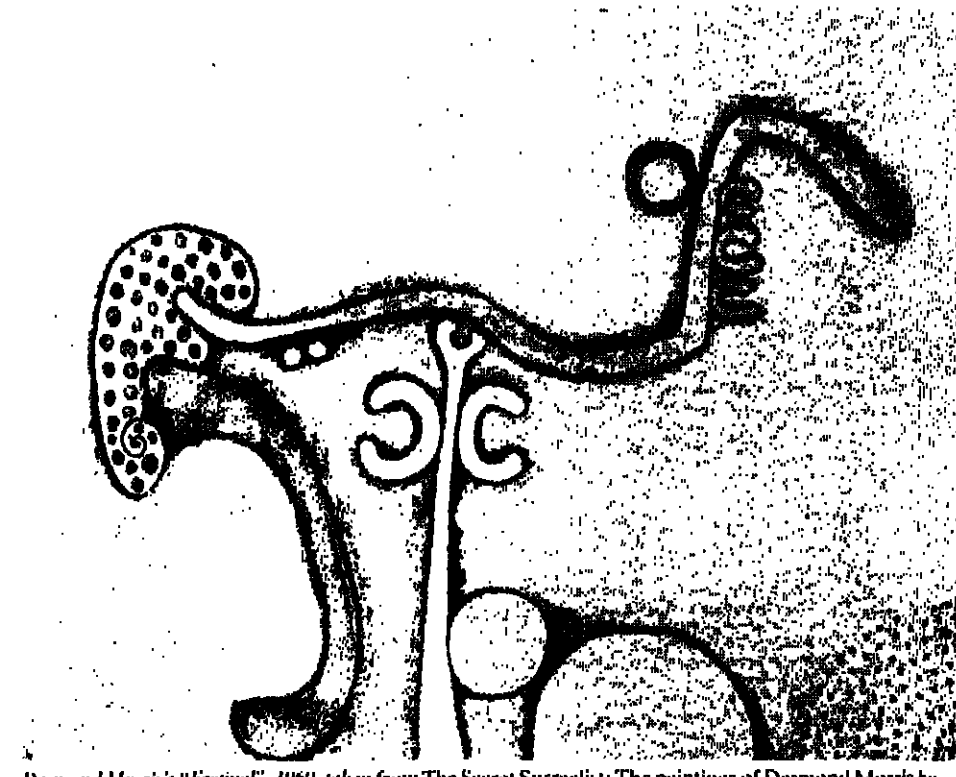
doubt why he has not countered the systems of the theorists with a systematic critique.

Where Parrinder is tactful if a little peeved, Crews is unrestrainedly offensive. A lapsed Freudian, he has lately discovered the importance of empirical corroboration and falsifiability, and is determined to make as much noise as possible about them in order to embarrass the psychoanalytic community. Crews's destructive talents are considerable, and the charge-list he makes out against the Freudian tradition (with the help of Adolf Grünbaum and others) is often genuinely embarrassing. Yet there is a certain hubristic recklessness in these collected reviews which peeps through in a remark like this: "As sociologists, all we can do is begin . . . with a school of thought that we dislike, and try to say some objectively unpleasant things about the reasons for its popularity." The joke is supposed to be at the expense of sociology, but it stands, all the same, as an adequate description of Crews's method as his obvious relish for disputation tempts him to move on from Freud to the entire "school of suspicion" embracing Marxism and post-structuralism. His chief objection to psychoanalysis – that it rests on the unreliable basis of clinical free-association and intuitive self-analysis – is quite inapplicable to Marxism, which appeals instead to the evidence of history; but Crews will not let that spall his chance to embark on a mischievous travesty.

The further one reads in *Skeptical Engagements* the more one realizes how unoriginal Crews's approach really is, and how often he uses the rules of empirical science as a bludgeon rather than a light. His unshakeable conviction that Freudians are a gang of lying cocaine-crazed ideologues and hypocrites whose whole system is designed to cover up Freud's failure would be, for a genuine sceptic, quite impossible to sustain. Crews is really practising an ugly sub-Nietzschean strain of cynicism: Deconstruction can be explained away as a self-serving professorial conspiracy to corrupt the minds of the young and keep its practitioners in power; Freudianism is a brain-washing racket contrived to fleece its clients for as long as possible; and Marxism is no more than the self-justification of power-hungry intellectuals and dictators (the old cry of the

nouveaux philosophes ten years ago – Crews is closer to Paris than he admits). Crews's suspicions about the school of suspicion are themselves suspiciously unwilling to credit his opponents with any motive other than the most squalid will to power. So determined is he to outlaw the Freudians, Marxists and post-structuralists from the realm of rational discussion that he thus unwittingly disqualifies himself.

One lamentable practice which Crews rightly scorns is the increasingly revived trick of medieval rhetoric in which one attempts to substantiate one's theoretical argument not by reference to anything so vulgarly empirical as a fact or a text but merely by invoking a name from the sacred pantheon. Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Lacan, Barthes; just reciting off their names is (as Auden said in a very different context) ever so comfy, since it safely defers the issue at hand to nothing less than a transcendental signified; in short, to a star. There are several parallels to be drawn between contemporary literary theory and Hollywood in the 1920s, but the most prominent is the star system: this has not yet reached the stage at which pubescent mobs faint in the aisles, but already Methuen have published literary theory's first hard-cover fan magazine, informing us, for instance, that Barbara Johnson – the most lucid of the ex-Yale deconstructionists – owns a dog named Nietzsche. It is hard to throw up one's hands in horror at *Criticism in Society*, though, if only because Imre Szalusinsky makes such an amiable guide. In his interviews with nine of the leading luminaries he has a relaxed, cheerfully inquisitive manner and an engaging line in Australian self-deprecation. He sets out to organize the Greatest Seminar on Earth by inviting all his victims to discuss the same short poem by Wallace Stevens, but Derrida declares himself incompetent to deal with English texts, and when Szalusinsky comes to interview Frank Kermode he has forgotten to bring the poem with him; as if to make good the loss, Kermode presents him with an obscene acrostic. Once Barbara Johnson has picked out all the important elements of Stevens's lyric (not the words but the ellipses, naturally), it seems that there can be nothing to be added, but J. Hillis



Desmond Morris's "Festival", 1969, taken from *The Secret Surrealist: The paintings of Desmond Morris by Desmond Morris* (112pp. Phaidon, £20. 07148 24488).

Miller proves us wrong in dazzling style. Many of these interviews are blandly non-committal but the star turn – Harold Bloom's – is a gloriously explosive display of paranoia and savagery in which he fulminates against the "fools, knaves, charlatans and bureaucrats" who dominate the literary academy. "Bugger them: because they don't know how to read," Bloom exclaims in one of his quieter moments, reaffirming his view of criticism as a combative, not a co-operative venture.

With the exception of Frank Kermode, the theorists interviewed in *Criticism in Society* belong to the North American scene rather than to the British, which is just as well when one considers the unedifying spectacle of academic stardom here, where the ideas and the books shrink inexorably as the celebrity's television profile inflates. Malcolm Bradbury's *Mensonge*, a spoof tribute to a heroic post-structuralist who deconstructs himself into

oblivion, is an April folly which has been padded out in a brazen grab for the Christmas gift market – presumably for the jaded exegete who has everything (as magi and followers of rock music know, Christmas is the time for stars to plummet alarmingly earthwards). David Lodge contributes an afterword in which he cannot help letting slip the accurate observation that the book has only one joke in it, endlessly recycled: a very predictable equation of *la nouvelle critique* with *la nouvelle cuisine*. Frank Kermode in his interview with Szalusinsky remarks that "Cambridge, of course, is exceptionally hostile to any kind of thought at all"; and there are many others who would extend the charge to British intellectual life as a whole, claiming that the British are so uncomfortable with ideas that they can only digest them by belittling them amid many a nervous giggle. Such detractors will cherish *Mensonge* as a prize exhibit in their argument.

"History and the Novel", are particularly close to White in their criticism of the "documentary model of knowledge" – in other words archive positivism – and their concern with the problems of writing history. In the other essays in the volume he speaks with a more distinctive voice and pursues his own particular interests, such as the importance of Freud for historians and the problems raised by attempts to write the history of popular culture. LaCapra is well aware of the studies made by some of the younger members of the *Annales* group, notably Roger Chartier, on the subject of popular culture, but his own inspiration comes from the work of Bakhtin (on whom he published a perceptive essay in his previous volume). It is from this position that LaCapra engages with three contemporary historians of culture: Carlo Ginzburg, Carl Schorske and Robert Darnton. His essay on *The Cheese and the Worms*, subtitled "The Cosmos of a Twentieth-Century Historian", is a cross between a belated book review and an attempt to re-analyse Ginzburg's data, its main point being that the miller Menocchio, the hero of Ginzburg's study, is a "liminal" figure rather than a representative of popular culture. Darnton, on the other hand, is criticized for "his willingness to reduce the exceptional and the problematic to the unexceptional and readily categorized dimensions of a collective discourse". I do not find these criticisms fair. They depend on attributing to the author a criticism of a position less complex than the one he has actually adopted. Indeed, LaCapra himself finally admits to "a measure of exaggeration". I doubt whether this rhetorical strategy was well chosen. It would be a pity if it stopped readers taking the author's arguments seriously. For LaCapra and White (however liminal their position in the profession), are among the few historians currently prepared to rethink the assumptions underlying the craft.

In White's discussion of historical narrative there are a few rather curious lacunae. He does not, for example, refer to the work of the literary critics who have recently been exploring the rhetoric of non-fiction. His essays of the 1980s make no reference to what Lawrence Stone has termed the "revival of narrative" or to the attempts by historians to find new forms of narrative; partly as a response to White's challenge in the 1960s. He does not, for example, refer to the work of Golo Mann, whose account of the last days of Wallenstein adopts a technique reminiscent of the stream-of-consciousness novel, and in particular of his father's *Lone in Weimar*. He does not refer to the literary experiments of Jonathan Spence, who has a somewhat old-fashioned image of the *Annales*, whom he accuses of a "scientism" many younger members of the group (at least) reject. White's often acute criticisms of his profession would be still more cogent if he showed himself to be as aware of recent developments within it as he obviously is in the case of literary criticism and philosophy.

Dominick LaCapra might be described as a disciple of White, to whose work he devotes an appreciative (though critical) essay in his previous collection, *Rethinking Intellectual History*. In his new volume, the first essay, "Rhetoric and History", and the final essay,

to come to terms with the "death" of politics, narrative and history. On the other hand, his positive verdict on Ricoeur implies that narrative is alive after all and living in Paris (despite the efforts of the *Annales* school to expel it). It might have been helpful to have made firmer distinctions between types of narrative, some of which would seem to have more narrativity than others. This criticism applies to Ricoeur too: in describing Braudel's *Mediterranean* as a narrative, he runs the risk of watering down the concept of narrative so much that it almost ceases to be useful for analysis.

Rethinking the historian's craft

Peter Burke

HAYDEN WHITE
The Content of the Form: Narrative discourse and historical representation
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DOMINICK LA CAPRA
History and Criticism
143pp. Cornell University Press. \$21.95.
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Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra are two cultural historians who find the intellectual company of philosophers, such as Paul Ricoeur, and literary critics, such as Fredric Jameson, more congenial than that of their professional colleagues. Although they have published monographs in their time, their favourite form is the essay, which they employ with skill and grace to interpret and to criticize contemporary thinkers, from Mikhail Bakhtin to Michel Foucault, and above all to disturb what they regard as the complacency of empiricist historians such as Geoffrey Elton (the example is LaCapra's).

White's *The Content of the Form* follows on from the "essays in cultural criticism" collected in his *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), in which he shocked some readers and delighted others by suggesting (as Roland Barthes had done) that the difference between history and fiction was less important than is generally believed, that historians were still stuck in the mid-nineteenth-century, the age of literary "realism", and that they should make use of contemporary artistic insights. The volume also included an important essay attempting to "decode" the ideas of Foucault by placing them in

the context of modern intellectual history. The new volume also contains a piece on Foucault, one of the most acute essays to have been published on that elusive thinker, concentrating on his style and in particular his use of paradox, irony and other forms of caleches, departures from the rules of ordinary discourse.

The duplication of essays on Foucault does not mean that White is offering his readers no more than the mixture as before. For one thing, the author's own rhetoric is changing. He is less concerned to shock or to assert and more concerned to persuade and to question; several essays end on an interrogative note. He has also become more preoccupied with the question of historical narrative, which he raised as early as 1966 in "The Burden of History": the essay which probably did more than anything else to establish him as the enfant terrible of his profession. Four of the eight essays in the new collection centre on narrative, or "narrativity". One of them discusses examples of medieval annals and chronicles in order to suggest that these genres are alternative rather than imperfect histories; and that the reader's demand for narrative closure in a history is really a demand for a moral. Another essay discusses Ricoeur's view of historical narrative as "a privileged instantiation of the human capacity to endow the experience of time with meaning". A third essay is concerned with Fredric Jameson's adaptation of what White calls "the Marxist master narrative" of the historical process, and a fourth with the question of narrative in contemporary historical theory, from Hans Georg Gadamer to Renan Braudel.

White does not always make his own position absolutely clear. His critique of Jameson follows the lines of his critique of traditional historians in suggesting that Jameson is still living in the nineteenth century and has filled

Ends and means

Brian Harrison

OLIVE ANDERSON
Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England
475pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £40.
019820101 X

It is extraordinary that suicide, a topic so central to sociology's growth as a discipline, should only now have found its historian in Britain. Olive Anderson has done an immense amount of careful work on difficult sources – medical, legal and administrative. Continuously analytic in her approach, conscious always of the difficulties, unpretentiously open to influence from other disciplines, unobtrusively but consistently humane, she is an admirable guide, and complements the map of her new world with a full and detailed index.

The stereotypes of suicide are, she finds, very misleading. Alert to the defects of the statistics, she does not try to extract from them more than they can reveal, but she thinks they can be used to correct inaccurate contemporary impressions. She begins by taking up the role established in Britain by J. Netten Radcliffe in the 1850s as the cartographer of suicide. Suicide was not, we discover, more common in industrial and urban than in rural areas, it was not usually committed by people isolated from social contact, it did not normally take the form of throwing oneself off bridges over the Thames, it was not necessarily correlated with poverty, it was not predominantly committed by women, nor were female suicides any less premeditated than male. And as suicide became more prominent among the causes of death towards the end of the nineteenth century, the public became less conscious of it, because coroners were cloaking it with expert language and bureaucratic procedure and hiding it away in the new mortu-

aries and coroners' court-houses. "Paradoxically, as suicide became statistically more common, it also began to be seen as a much more unfamiliar, untoward, and embarrassing affair."

Essential to Anderson's approach is the idea that there is a "culture" of suicide, whereby its incidence and methods vary with time and place. People in some occupations – doctors, innkeepers, barristers, butchers – were far more likely to kill themselves than, say, miners, quarrymen and fishermen. This has something to do with ease of access to the poisons and weapons of suicide, but occupational make-up will not explain everything about patterns of suicide in an area. In one of her most sensitive and penetrating sections – which provides a standing illustration of the affinity between social history and social anthropology – Anderson contrasts suicide patterns in London with those in the district of Hastings. She thinks that suicide's relative prevalence in this part of Sussex reflects the dominant culture of puritan independence among the "archetypal 'open villagers'": craftsmen, farmers and innkeepers, but rarely agricultural labourers. Among such people "there survived that link between despair of personal salvation and thoughts of suicide which had been commonplace among ardent Puritans in Bunyan's day", but which was much less common in mid-Victorian London. There is, she writes, "a geography of suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England and Wales . . . which must be understood in terms of local traditions as well as occupational settings".

Anderson's close investigation of newspapers and coroners' records reminds us once again how limited is the impact of law and legislation on conduct. Magistrates, juries and insurance companies responded to a humane public opinion which refused to regard suicide, let alone attempted suicide, as a crime. Those who were rescued from it may have been

arrested and even confined, but sympathetic prison chaplains and asylum doctors, however inadequate their remedies, saw their role as custodial rather than punitive, and eventually helped to pioneer the probationary service.

Anderson emphasizes at the outset that hers "is a historian's book". It therefore complements particularly in place with a sense of change over time, both in methods of suicide and in attitudes to it. "The experience of dying by suicide, like any other experience, was very much part and parcel of a particular historical context." The search for ways out of physical as well as psychological pain made it natural that methods of suicide should follow fashions in medical pain-killing. Hence early-Victorian blood-letting and alcoholic prescription fostered suicidal throat-cutting and alcoholism, just as later medical methods fostered the suicidal overdose. Likewise, suicide methods respond to wider social changes – not just to the vogue for suicide among late-Victorian intellectuals, but to the convenience of the gas oven and the railway line. "The growth of commuting . . . established in the twentieth century a new variety of suicide, distinct from suicide in public places outdoors, and with its own moods and tensions." Yet a whole generation elapsed before people who wanted to kill themselves woke up to the railway's potential – a sign, says Anderson, that "it is not the existence of facilities for suicide which matters, but popular awareness of them as such". There was change, too, in the perception of suicide as a social problem. As long as suicide was seen as a problem of morality and poverty (as in the early-Victorian period) it could never generate specialized treatment. But when the Anti-Suicide Bureau was established in 1907, society at last moved towards more precise diagnosis, and gained access to more refined information about suicidal motive.

One strength of Anderson's approach is that her continuous pursuit of generalization does

not preclude rescuing from oblivion the ordinary and often obscure individual. There is Charlie Sudds, recently dismissed from his Southwark engineering shop, who in the early hours of New Year's Day in 1861 shouted, "A merry Christmas and a happy new year to all", and shot himself through the head. There is the valet James Mason, described by his master's surgeon as "a peculiar silent man", who in the same year received a note (never subsequently found), read it by the gaslight in the hall and "rushed upstairs very fast indeed, without a candle", and was later found hanging from a bedpost in his locked room. And there is Harry the Walworth office-boy, who poisoned himself in 1911 after a dispute with his mother, but who left a note behind for the "little sweetheart" who alone had remembered to send him a birthday card.

Yet the famous, too, have their uses for the social historian: their suicides mould conduct far more widely than those of the obscure, and are more likely to illuminate public attitudes. By the late-Victorian period, Josephine Butler was using Mrs Percy's death to discredit state-regulated prostitution. Her suicide, she said, "might be a means in the hands of Providence . . . of shaking the system". The historian R. C. K. Ensor found in the altruistic suicide of Captain Oates in the Antarctic an index to the shifting moral emphasis of the Edwardian period. And in Emily Davison's militant suffragette death at the Derby in 1913 we see suicide being deliberately used as a political weapon. "To re-enact the tragedy of Calvary for generations unborn," she wrote towards the end of her life, "that is the last consummate sacrifice of the militant!" Important shifts in attitudes to life and the afterlife are waiting here to be explored. The absence from its index of the names Davison, Percy, Oates – and, for that matter, of Castlereagh and Pigott – is the one missed opportunity in an important, adventurous and thoroughly resourceful book.

Better than a cure

Roy Porter

JAMES C. RILEY
The Eighteenth-Century Campaign to Avoid Disease
213pp. Macmillan. £29.50.
0331 406222
J. R. SMITH
The Speckled Monster: Smallpox in England, 1670-1970, with particular reference to Essex
217pp. Chelmsford: Essex Record Office.
£14.95.
0900360 682

Despite the popular view that preventive medicine was a nineteenth-century invention, a real response to the ills of industrialization, it was, in reality, a true child of the Enlightenment. The eighteenth-century quest for a science of man naturally encompassed physical as well as social and psychological well-being. Environmentalism in the tradition of Montesquieu was eager to determine the impact of geography, climate and atmosphere upon health; and mercantilism believed that the thriving state was the one teeming with healthy workers. Political arithmetic generated new tools for the quantitative study of populations and epidemics, while, on the Continent, *Cameralwissenschaft* promised the enforcement of health through a bureaucratic medical police.

James C. Riley's study, *The Eighteenth-Century Campaign to Avoid Disease*, admirably sets the early history of the preventive movement within this broader philosophical context of man treated as a natural figure. While giving due attention to such figures as Arbuthnot and Mead, Ramazzini and Frank, Riley enterprisingly explores some of the lesser advocates, such as Burggrave, Böhrns and Finke. And one of the chief virtues of his approach lies in resisting the temptation of forcing his campaigners into the mould of Victorian public health. If, unlike Chadwick and Nightingale, the eighteenth-century reformers were not obsessed with piped water, mains sewerage and scrubbed floors, that was because their neo-Hippocratic theories of health and disease had other priorities on

which to concentrate – miasmas and standing water, ventilation and fumigation.

Riley does not, however, wholly avoid the traps of anachronism. Above all, he is repeatedly impatient with his health campaigners for what he sees as their "failure" to become "sceptical" about their multi-factoral environmentalist theories of disease causation: "they observed both too many things and too few things". Moreover, they were "muddled" about testing their hypotheses and their aspirations greatly outstripped their achievements. Their programmes probably expedited marsh-draining and so the fight against malaria, but beyond that, Riley concludes that the contributions made by these thinkers to the positive improvement of health and thereby to demographic explosion remains problematic.

This may be because he is looking for the wrong things in the wrong places. The real heroes of prevention were not Riley's roll-call of theorists but the grass-roots practitioners. Riley gives the medical rank-and-file little attention, but their achievements were greater than he allows. Indeed, although he hardly mentions it, the eighteenth century saw the first ever clear-cut victory over disease gained by the development of preventive techniques: first smallpox inoculation, and then, right at the close of the century, the introduction of vaccination.

Medical theory – indeed, the medical élite in general – contributed little to the introduction of inoculation. A folk practice in the Near East, variolation was introduced into early Georgian England by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Though well received in fashionable circles, it made only halting headway for a generation until, from mid-century, it was exploited with quite dramatic success by a bunch of obscure country practitioners, above all Robert Sutton, and his son, Daniel, in East Anglia. These medical entrepreneurs astutely adapted inoculation to the needs of a market society. They made the operation simple,

cheap and quick; and they "mass produced" it, inoculating whole villages at a time at the request of local authorities, anxious not just about mortality but about the economic havoc which epidemics created.

Detailed analysis of the commercialization of inoculation forms the core of J. R. Smith's study of smallpox in Essex, *The Speckled Monster*, an exemplary instance of how local researches can illuminate national issues. Smith pays due tribute to the business sense of the inoculators: Sutton even hired his own chaplain, a Georgian Satchi and Satchi broadcasting the benefits of inoculation from the pulpit. Indeed, they needed to be canny dealers, because inoculation (giving a disease to prevent a disease) prima facie smacked of quackery. The fact that backwoods gentry, persons and overseers of the poor proved in the event so receptive says much for the alert, utilitarian temper of what may be called the provincial Enlightenment.

The contrast Smith draws with nineteenth-

century obstructionism is most instructive. In 1853 Parliament made vaccination compulsory. This "medical tyranny" drew a barrage of protest, battles in the courts, a proliferation of anti-vaccination societies, and civil disobedience by Primitive Methodists and other fundamentalists digging in their heels against this blasphemous interference with the ways of Providence. Georgian local pragmatism hardly roused a protest; the heavy hand of State compulsion stirred up a hornets' nest under Victoria.

This brace of books looks at the goal of preventive medicine from two different sides. The theorists Riley discusses mark that moment in European culture when, thanks to science and secularization, the health of the body was newly taking priority over the holiness of the soul. But Smith's humble inoculators remind us how misleading a picture of the medical endeavour we acquire if we concentrate on theory not practice, upon books and not bodies.

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Telling of fortunes

Robin Briggs

JOSEPH BERGIN
Cardinal Richelieu: Power and the pursuit of
wealth
311pp. Yale University Press. £22.50.
030034954
DANIEL DESSERT
Fouquet
404pp. Fayard. 99fr.
2231017050

Royal ministers in seventeenth-century France were expected to make great fortunes from their positions; power, wealth and prestige ran so naturally together that contemporaries had difficulty in separating them. Lineage was the only claim to distinction which ministers could not easily acquire, despite the efforts of Colbert and others to concoct fake genealogies for themselves. Great estates and ostentatious châteaux were the signs of royal favour and confidence, the necessary evidence of political and personal success. Hostile pamphleteers might accuse their targets of rapacity and dishonesty, but there is little to suggest that most people were genuinely shocked by acquisitive behaviour they would gladly have initiated if given the chance.

The careers of Richelieu and Fouquet illustrate very well the realities and the paradoxes of this situation. Joseph Bergin's study of Richelieu's fortune achieves the unexpected feat of adding substantially to our knowledge of one of the most important figures in French history, largely through the exploitation of a group of hitherto unused documents. These are the notarial records of the Cardinal's business transactions, which cast a flood of light on the methods by which his estates and revenues were developed and managed. Daniel Dessert's biography of Nicolas Fouquet is a more general study, but in this case the lack of work on the disgraced *surintendant des finances* lends a different kind of novelty. There was a direct link between the two men, for François Fouquet, Nicolas's father, was president of Richelieu's personal council, and was particularly active in handling ecclesiastical business; such connections are typical of the tight little world in which these families moved.

Those primarily interested in Richelieu as a statesman will probably find only occasional sustenance in Bergin's well-constructed and elegantly written *Cardinal Richelieu: Power and the pursuit of wealth*. It is certainly not going to help many undergraduates as they struggle to assess Richelieu's contribution to the development of the French State, although there are some subtle and important arguments in it which bear on this question. The book's great virtue is rather that it places Richelieu within the social and economic context of his time, giving an unusual and welcome sense of the Cardinal as a man of the early seventeenth century, whose aims and actions were determined by immediate and pragmatic concerns. In the process the reader learns a great deal about the management of aristocratic estates, the operations of the legal system in relation to property, and the profits to be derived from participation in the great apparatus of state finance.

Richelieu was deeply marked by the crisis his family underwent during his youth: the premature death of his father left an estate so burdened with debt that the heirs found it prudent to refuse the succession. It took great determination and patience on the part of the eldest son, aided by more than a touch of legal chicanery, to restore the family to relative affluence. His premature death in a duel in 1619 threatened to bring on a new financial collapse, but by now the rising political credit of the younger brother ensured victory in the round of lawsuits which followed. Richelieu had seen his family threatened with a precipitous drop into penury and insignificance; his own efforts would create the greatest private fortune France had yet seen. Bergin's calculations show that the capital value of his assets at his death was in the region of 20 million livres, while his known annual income was around a million, and his true revenues maybe half as much again. A good proportion of this income was of course derived from benefices and pensions which could not pass to his heirs, but

there was still enough to endow two rich *duches-pairies* for his nephews, one of whom was to take the family name and become *duc de Richelieu*. At one bound a family of the minor gentry from Poitou had been established among the greatest noble houses of France. Although the Cardinal certainly sought fame and power for their own sake, there can be no mistaking the fierce determination with which he strove to turn them into a permanent position for his heirs.

For reasons of both security and prestige it was essential that a substantial proportion of Richelieu's investment should be in land. As Bergin shrewdly points out, it was no easy

background, while emphasizing the direct interest Richelieu took in the management of his personal affairs, to which he seems to have brought the same ruthless single-mindedness he did to the business of the State. Richelieu's hostility to concentrations of wealth and power was certainly not applied to himself, his close ally Condé, or other members of his family and clientele.

Although he often advanced short-term loans to the hard-pressed treasury, or allowed his jewels and plate to stand security for others, Richelieu never committed his wealth significantly to propping up the royal credit. He was instead virtually the only man in France to



"Madame de Liancourt with the Children of France" (the three-year-old Louis XIV and his younger brother, Philippe), 1641, a French School portrait reproduced from Diana de Marley's *Louis XIV and Versailles* (143pp. £14.95, 0713453648), which will be published shortly by Batsford.

matter to build up large estates, even for a man who possessed such extraordinary resources in both cash and power. Landowners only sold when they had to, while their right to alienate property was hedged about with all kinds of legal restrictions. Richelieu's chief quarry lay among those indebted families – very like his own at the beginning of the century – whose creditors were demanding satisfaction. He and his agents showed enormous shrewdness and persistence in pursuing likely victims, concentrating on three regions in which they built up networks of property: the family's native Poitou, Paris and its environs and far to the south-west in Angoumois and Saintonge. Any policy facilitated management, while any existing mortgages were bought out, so that the whole vast estate, perhaps alone among those of contemporary grandees, was entirely free of debt. There seems to have been less concern to maximize rental income, perhaps because the Cardinal and his household were realistic about the inherent limitations of management through *fermiers*, who could never be effectively controlled at long range. It is interesting to see that the difficult conditions of the 1630s, largely created by the minister's expensive foreign policies and the spiralling taxation they brought in their wake, seem to have depressed his own income from land. But it is doubtful whether he was much perturbed by this, for there were many easier ways in which he could push up his income, and the wealth which financed the land purchases was essentially generated from these other operations.

As an ecclesiastical pluralist Richelieu was *hors concours* in his time, some twenty major benefices bringing him an income of around 300,000 livres a year towards the end of his life. He also made huge sums from the admiralty jurisdiction he had amalgamated under his control, from his governorships, and from his investments in royal domains and rents. In all these areas Bergin skilfully establishes the

receive his interest payments and pensions in full, subject only to modest delays. His declared willingness to use his own resources in an emergency was never really put to the test, and perhaps even he was not sure what it meant.

One of the most fascinating things to be revealed by this admirable study is the history of Richelieu's fortune after his death. The vultures immediately gathered, with Louis XIII himself taking the lead. The estate's legal position was often weak precisely because Richelieu's power had been so great in his lifetime that potential opponents had held off bringing lawsuits, keeping their powder dry for use once he was gone. If the duchesse d'Aiguillon was the Cardinal's favourite niece, perhaps this was because he saw in her some of the same steel as in himself; she fought a brilliant rearguard action, mixing obstinacy with judicious concessions, to ensure that the essential features of the will were carried out. Such was her success that even the spendthrift first *duc de Richelieu* proved unable to destroy the patrimony his great-uncle had created for him.

Rising in the shadow of the great minister, the Fouquet family were unmistakably bourgeois, despite their half-hearted attempts to present themselves as the descendants of minor nobles who had suffered temporary reverses. Nicolas Fouquet took the classic path to membership of the ruling élite, buying the office of a *maître des requêtes*; then serving as a provincial and army *intendant*. Already advancing in favour with Richelieu's successor Cardinal Mazarin, the crisis of the Fronde allowed him to display both personal loyalty to the Cardinal and a rare skill in managing men. As *procureur général* of the parlement of Paris from 1650 Fouquet managed to walk the tight-rope between acceptability to his colleagues and fidelity to Mazarin, playing a major part in the final recovery of Paris for the Crown in 1652. The following year he became *surinten-*

dant des finances, with the heavy responsibility of scraping together the funds to maintain the long war of attrition with Spain – a post he was to hold until his dramatic arrest and fall in 1661.

While historians have usually recognized that Fouquet was the victim of court intrigues, they have also tended to treat him as guilty of gross mismanagement, speculation and ambition, symbolized by his imprudence in showing off his magnificent new château at Vaux-le-Vicomte to the envious Louis XIV. His image is that of a lightweight libertine, who was rightly displaced to make way for the far more industrious and honest Colbert, even if his punishment was unfairly harsh. Daniel Dessert's biography is in part a passionate *plaidoyer* intended to rehabilitate Fouquet, whom he portrays as Colbert's victim before posterity as well as in his own time.

There is little doubt that Colbert set out to blacken his rival's name by every available means, or that he caricatured Fouquet's performance as *surintendant*, but so much of the relevant documentation has been lost that it remains very difficult to test either Fouquet's competence or his honesty. Dessert argues that he probably managed as well as anyone could have done in wartime: the high interest rates he allowed the financiers were inevitable if they were to lend at all. After 1659 he was making genuine progress towards restoring financial stability, although his involvement with the major creditors (of whom he was himself probably the largest) made it impossible for him to treat them with the harshness Colbert would display. One is left with the impression that Louis XIV probably did gain from the change of finance ministers, at least in the short term, but that the extraordinary conspiracy to arrest and try Fouquet was unnecessary, since he had offered to resign anyway. Unnecessary to the king, at least; Colbert had very serious reasons for trying to destroy his predecessor completely. If anyone should have been on trial for speculation and disloyalty in 1661, it was Colbert. As general manager of all Mazarin's affairs, he had master-minded the corrupt operations which accumulated a fortune of thirty-seven millions, including nine millions in cash, for the avaricious Cardinal. The financiers were held aloft almost worthless paper, most of which the Crown would confiscate, incarcerating in the Bastille many of Fouquet's clientele as a reward for their support during the war years. Meanwhile the new *duc de Mazarin* (one of Richelieu's La Melleraye relatives, who had married the minister's niece Hortense Mancini) walked off with the swag, in specie, jewels, works of art and real estate.

As for Fouquet himself, Dessert seems to establish that he entered office a very rich man and left it a virtual bankrupt. His second marriage having brought him a large inheritance, he was probably worth four millions in 1653; by 1661 his debts were roughly equal to his assets. This was not a matter of extravagance at Vaux, for his lands and châteaux were part of his assets, but of his willingness to use his own wealth as security for the royal finances. Fouquet's recklessness was with his own money rather than the King's, and at his trial he was able to make this so clear that even a hand-picked court, in a dramatic vote, by a margin of thirteen to nine, refused to sentence him to death. Dessert gives an excellent account of the trial, of Fouquet's long imprisonment at Pignerol, where he died in 1680 on the eve of being released, and of his wife's valiant efforts to preserve the remains of the family fortune. Ironically, Fouquet was the only minister of the period to have a distinguished eighteenth-century descendant, for the *maréchal-duc de Belle-Isle*, general and war minister under Louis XV, and seemingly the embodiment of the *épée* as against the *robe*, was the fallen *surintendant's* grandson. It must be said that Dessert's book probably exaggerates the case for its subject, whose actions are generally placed in the most favourable light possible. Even when the sections on the finances are read in conjunction with Dessert's more detailed earlier studies, the verdict on Fouquet's performance can perhaps only be "not proven". But to have achieved so much on behalf of a neglected and misunderstood figure is still a considerable accomplishment, and one which provides new perspectives on a vital moment in French history.

The cost of going private

Vani Borooah

CENTO VELJANOVSKI, with MARK BENTLEY
Selling the State: Privatisation in Britain
239pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
029770803
KATE ASCHER
The Politics of Privatisation: Contracting out
public services
293pp. Macmillan. £30 (paperback, £8.95).
0333403916

For those with an interest in economic policy, these are confusing times. Up until last week, we were being assured by the Government of the correctness of theirs: of the infallibility of the market-place, of the benefits of rolling back the frontiers of the State and harnessing incentives and entrepreneurial drive, and of the success of the Tory programme of privatization. This last was evidenced by the eager throngs of underwriters and would-be shareholders who appeared with each new issue. What are we to believe today, with market conditions drastically changed, and the quarter of a million British Petroleum shareholders and the issue's underwriters facing huge losses?

The two books under review examine Britain's experience with privatization in two separate areas. The first, dealt with by Cento Veljanovski, is the one with which most people associate the term "privatization" – namely the sale of nationalized industries to private investors. The second area, which has not received the same attention as the first (mainly, one suspects, because there are no quick profits to be made out of it by the investing public) is the "contracting out" to the private sector for the provision of services that were, hitherto, provided by personnel in the public sector. This is Kate Ascher's subject.

Veljanovski's *Selling the State: Privatisation in Britain* serves more as a vehicle for conveying information than as an analysis of the situation. Those interested in the details of the sale of nationalized industries and the subsequent control of their privatized counterparts by means of regulatory agencies, will find the latter half of this book invaluable, and not invalidated by recent events; it contains a wealth of detail on the steps involved in the planning and execution of such sales, on the methods of regulating private monopolies, on the role of regulatory agencies and their current structure, and finally on the privatization experience of British Telecom.

Veljanovski presents his facts well but unfortunately his style is not one ideally suited to a discussion of the ideological issues that lie behind privatization, a discussion which constitutes, roughly, the first part of the book. One would have liked to have read the author's evaluation of the issues involved, rather than having to plough through a staccato recitation of points made by others. Veljanovski's habit of seeing things in terms of polar opposites (free market versus central planning) is also a simplistic way of putting the case for privatization. It is true that centrally planned economies have much to learn (as they would themselves increasingly acknowledge) from the West. It is, however, equally true that the economic miracles of the Far East (of which the Western world is justly apprehensive) were not achieved without a large measure of governmental direction. It is a sobering thought that there are only two contemporary exam-

ples of growth through untrammelled private enterprise – Hong Kong and Singapore. Perhaps Britain, under Mrs Thatcher, might end up as the third, but, on the basis of Veljanovski's arguments, one rather doubts it.

Kate Ascher's *The Politics of Privatisation: Contracting out public services* is an altogether more thoughtful and coherent book and one that sheds much light on government policies for privatization. There are three main contract service industries in Britain – catering, cleaning and textile maintenance – and the branch of the public sector most involved in contracting out to them is the National Health Service. For some time, all three industries have suffered from declining private-sector markets, and this has prompted them to seek avenues for advancement in the public sector. To this end, the strategy employed by the major contractors has been "both simple and successful... they have directed their lobbying efforts almost exclusively at political decision makers, particularly those at the national level". The fact that they were preaching to the converted meant that such efforts rapidly bore fruit. (The conversion of the Conservative Party is the subject of an interesting chapter; Ascher makes the point that here they were taking over and broadening a policy originally initiated by Harold Wilson.) By way of con-

trast, trade unions have been less successful in protecting the interests of their public-sector members from the threat of privatization, mainly because their refusals to co-operate have alienated a large number of otherwise sympathetic administrators.

These are the bare bones of the plot, presented in the first part of the book; the second part examines the interactions of the various groups in actual tendering exercises carried out both by the NHS and by local authorities. Ascher draws several valuable lessons from these case studies. First, contracting out by means of compulsory tendering in the Health Service has increased efficiency in the in-house provision of services, making it more difficult for private firms to compete successfully for contracts. Second, the great danger of a "contracting out" policy is that it lays undue emphasis on low cost to the detriment of service standards. Third, while government is clearly on the side of private contractors, public-sector administrators, by virtue of their control over the details of the contract, have considerable influence over the tendering process. The "success" of privatization has therefore been dependent on the attitude of senior managers in the public sector. This has led to considerable dissatisfaction on the part of contractors, often justified, since management has tended to

adopt a protective attitude towards its ancillary workers. Finally, unions have interpreted privatization as an attack on their status, and the policy has engendered much bitterness.

What future do the two types of privatization have in Britain? Ascher's eminently coherent story leads one to conclude that contracting out services to the private sector has not been a success – owing not to any inherent flaw in the policy but rather to the highly politicized nature of its introduction as well as the futility of central agencies attempting to impose uniform solutions on diverse local problems. As for the sale of nationalized assets to investors, the panics of last week badly damaged, for the time being, the cosy relationship between the Government and financial institutions and the political credit gained by the Tories among those with enough money in the bank to buy a small piece of the State. But this large blip in the market may be more quickly forgotten than seems possible today. The important question, which few have seriously asked before now, is whether the substitution of private monopolies for public ones improves efficiency in those industries. Veljanovski is coy on that issue, but a recent survey for the National Consumer Council reports that the quality of service provided by British Telecom is the lowest among the public services.

Factors of expansion

D. K. Fieldhouse

STEPHANIE JONES
Two Centuries of Overseas Trading: The
origins and growth of the Inchcape Group
328pp. Macmillan. £33.
0333371720

Like many other modern business conglomerates, the Inchcape Group can be seen as a sea into which a large number of separate streams have run, over the 200 years of its evolution. It seems to have been able to absorb an indefinite number of new contributory flows, though there is no geological or gravitational reason why all these once independent commercial enterprises should have flowed in this particular direction. Conglomerates are formed deliberately, by digging canals and changing the course of nature. This, essentially, is what the third Lord Inchcape and his colleagues did from about 1948, converting the miscellany of his family's holdings in a variety of partnerships and companies, many of them based and operating abroad, into what by the 1980s had become a very large and highly diversified British-based holding company, the Inchcape Group Plc, whose activities range from tea estates to engineering and motor car distribution. *Two Centuries of Overseas Trading* describes how and why this happened.

Stephanie Jones, one-time archivist at Inchcape and thoroughly at home with its voluminous records, works backwards from the eventual whole to trace the origins of its component parts. Crudely divided, these constituents of the modern Inchcape Group fall into two categories: firms in which James Lyle Mackay, who became the first Lord Inchcape in 1911, held interests of various kinds by the time of his death in 1932; and others added by purchase or merger by the third Earl after he took effective control of existing businesses in 1948.

The processes involved in these two stages of capitalist concentration were profoundly different. J. L. Mackay made his fortune and built up his business interests in the classical mode, leaving Scotland as a young man and going to India, via London, to work for Mackinnon Mackenzie and Co, a firm of managing agents and one element in a huge complex of linked enterprises which included the British India Steam Navigation Company. By hard work, saving and judicious investment, Mackay built up his stake in these and a range of similar enterprises, mostly partnerships and almost all connected with India, though their tentacles also stretched out to East Africa and Australia. The early chapters of this book describe the origins of these many companies by region, treating them, rightly, as integral to the expansion of the British commercial economy, and throwing much new light on the nature of British business enterprise in the East. Before 1948 there was no structural link between the majority of these companies, whose common denominator was merely that the Inchcape family held shares, partnerships or directorships in them.

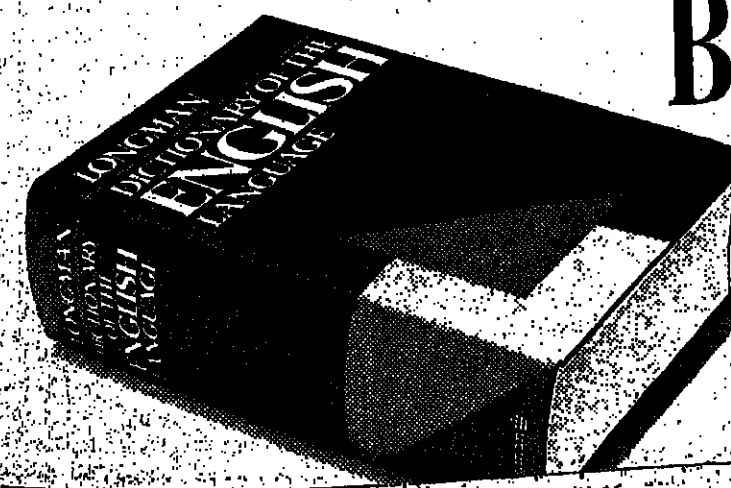
Only from 1948, and with hindsight, can one see the modern Inchcape Group forming. In 1948 change was necessary for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from the tax and other restrictive policies adopted by the newly independent Indian government to the need to pay death duties and provide for retiring partners. Nor was it practicable to sell all the family's shares in Indian companies without great loss of capital and jobs. The logical third alternative was to rationalize the Inchcape holdings and then incorporate those retained into a single public-ly quoted holding company based in London rather than India. This final objective was not seen clearly at first; but, by a process of gradual streamlining and disposal of marginal enterprises it was possible, by 1958, to set up Inchcape and Co Ltd as a British registered public company with a market value of

£2.565m which owned all or a majority of the shares in the retained companies.

Thereafter the new Group expanded very rapidly – by 1980 its market capitalization stood at nearly £400m – partly through purchase of the equity of other groups, which "increased its holdings by geometrical progression", and partly through development of its existing companies and the range of their activities. Inchcape's most spectacular acquisition was that of the Borneo Company in 1967, which virtually doubled the size of the Group, followed in 1972 by Dodwell and Co Ltd, operating in the Far East, and in 1975 by the Anglo-Thai Corporation, which again nearly doubled the Group's market value.

So dramatic a record of corporate expansion poses two main questions: how and why it was possible, and what the resulting conglomerate was like. Dr Jones does not provide specific answers to either, though there are suggestions. Expansion was helped by ample liquidity after the initial sale of equity; the high standing of the Group's shares, which enabled it to take over companies by exchange of equity; and international conditions during the 1960s and early 1970s favourable to its special skills. Yet in the last resort, and as with many comparable companies, expansion is explicable only in terms of the skill and drive of an entrepreneur who turns circumstances in his own direction: in this case, the third Lord Inchcape. Clearly Inchcape was prepared to go wherever he saw the chance to exploit his company's bundle of managerial skills and know-how.

This is not an easy book to read: it is dense with information and stuffed with the names of men and firms. At times also, particularly at the end, one can sense the pitey of a commissioned company history. But this is a work of real scholarship, which provides valuable new insights into the nature of British commercial enterprise overseas before 1914 and into the processes which unpredictably resulted in one of these enterprises absorbing most of the rest.



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The British Council – a case for treatment

Simon Jenkins

The British Council has long been a battlefield between the carnivores and herbivores of the public sector. In its fifty years of existence, this institutional ambassador for Britain's culture abroad has suffered no fewer than twenty-one separate reviews and enquiries, surely a record for any public body. With the exception of the Berrill ("Think Tank") report of 1977, which advocated its virtual abolition, all have said it deserved more money. Last year, in a passionate apology for the Council's arts work, Richard Hoggart told harrowing tales of cash "starvation" and morale at "rock bottom". The Council was, he said, regarded by foreigners as a "sign of British perversity, that we do not more adequately respond to their admiration and appetite for the British arts".

Earlier this year, the Council buried itself on the mercy of yet another investigation, this time by the House of Commons foreign affairs select committee. A ragged procession of its officers bemoaned their plight and desperately protested their Thatcherite credentials: reduced costs, private sector initiatives, sponsorship and "activity budgeting". What more should they do to be saved, they cried.

The committee turned out to be another dialogue of the converted. Friends fell over themselves to appear. No enemies were present. Even the Council's chief paymaster, the Foreign Office, was too canny to reveal any scepticism. A junior minister, Tim Eggar, when questioned on resources, remarked blandly: "With the inevitable constraints on public expenditure, I think we have got the balance right." The Council was rewarded with yet another encomium, saying that it should have more money. The select committee thus added to the pile in the Whitehall dustbin.

Public parsimony towards the British Council is equalled only by the unanimous view that Britain should be adopting a more aggressive and generous cultural diplomacy. As the select committee concluded, not only is too little spent in this area of foreign affairs (that is easy), but it is also too low a priority within existing budgets. By comparison, the Foreign Office's commercial and information work is well-supported, often with exaggerated claims

for its effectiveness in promoting British interests.

Although international comparisons in this area are notoriously unreliable, France, Germany and Japan all appear to spend between two and four times as much as Britain (exclusive of language schools). All of them now accept that cultural promotion is crucial to national public relations in support of both commercial and political diplomacy. All are greatly expanding their cultural programmes.

A prominent example of this is the "key figure" scholarship concept: the offering of special university places to students likely to play a central role in a target country's administrative and commercial life. Studies conducted for many past reports show the benefit of having a large stock of influential leaders round the world to whose education one has contributed. This is a field in which Britain, partly through empire, partly through the English language, has always been pre-eminent. As recently as 1985, of the seventy countries whose leaders had been educated abroad, twenty-seven had been taught in Britain, fourteen in France, thirteen in America and four in Russia.

Not so in future. Following the sudden withdrawal of subsidies to overseas students in 1980, Britain's share of the booming world market has plummeted from 11 per cent to 5 per cent, with a 30 per cent cut in actual numbers (to 18,000 assisted foreign students last year). The Japanese government recently decided, as part of an active commercial policy, to increase from 10,000 to 100,000 the number of foreign students encouraged to attend Japanese universities each year. Similar programmes have been launched by Canada, America, France, Germany and Holland. Germany (which gives overseas students free tuition) now takes 5,000 Indonesians. A sophisticated follow-up programme encourages them to buy German equipment long after they return to their home universities and government jobs. Britain now takes under 300 Indonesians and can expect scant exports to this and other similarly centralized economies.

There has also been retrenchment in arts activity. In British Council libraries and lecture tours and in education exchanges, in both Europe and the developing world. The reason

for this decline is that these aspects of the Council's work are precisely those covered by its "core" grant from the government. This grant has fallen since 1979 by 20 per cent volume terms and is likely to continue falling. Overseas staff have been cut from 4,460 in 1979 to 4,170 today (spread round eighty-one countries), while home-based staff have been cut by 20 per cent. Many of the latter were supplying advice and hospitality to visiting students at regional centres in Britain – such support is now a seriously depressed area of British diplomacy.

The conclusion drawn from this tale of woe by many of the Council staff is that a harsh Tory government will never support any activity whose benefits are so long-term and unquantifiable. Yet it has maintained or increased its support for many other activities whose benefits are hard to quantify, in education, the arts, defence and even conventional diplomacy. A more painful conclusion might be that the British Council, no longer able to promote and sustain a market for its services, is losing institutional credibility as custodian of Britain's cultural diplomacy. It is either selling a poor product or selling it to the wrong people.

The British Council is badly in need of some comprehensive demythologizing. The first myth to attack is its self-image of destitution. It is quite untrue to suggest – as apologists persistently do – that cultural diplomacy is necessarily waning simply because the Council's £74 million core grant from Whitehall has declined in value. The British Council, like the Arts Council, has slid into the habit of identifying its "cultural" output with the Exchequer's input. This presents an untrue picture of its work and is no help when it bids for funds.

The Council's turnover – the proper measure of its contribution to cultural diplomacy – has actually expanded both in money and in real terms each year since Mrs Thatcher came to power and is now £260 million. It rose by 6 per cent real this year over last. This has been achieved through greater efficiency, higher earnings from English-language teaching and other fees and services to the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) and bodies such as

In brief

Every British literary magazine is losing money, so stories that Rupert Murdoch is prepared to go down a million or more pounds on the 24-page weekly books section being planned by the *Sunday Times* are probably not exaggerated. Given the paper's circulation of 1.3 million, production costs alone will be enormous, and already reviewers are talking about retaining fees that will change their lives. The *TLS*, itself a beneficiary, though by comparison a modest one, of Mr Murdoch's sponsorship of the arts, should have a green cover this week.

The present *Sunday Times* inherited a formidable literary tradition, and many of the paper's best reviewers – among them George Steiner, Conor Cruise O'Brien, John Carey, Frederic Raphael and Peter Kemp – have been signed up for the new venture. Longer reviews are promised, as well as literary profiles and interviews, and an extended version of the bestseller lists which have recently become an increasingly prominent feature of the paper's books pages.

Bestseller lists mean the *New York Times Book Review*, and the *NYT* means fact. Most early comments on the planned supplement have been to do not with its as yet perhaps inevitably indistinct editorial character, but with size. *The Times* stressed that its sister paper would now, with the book review and other new features, regularly stretch to over 200 pages. And the *Bookseller* reminded publishers that those pages deliver (to use the jargon whose implications were decoded by Nicholas Hiley on this page three weeks ago) about four million readers to advertisers.

Whether British publishers, less persuaded than their New York counterparts of the value of newspaper advertising, want to pay the cost of that delivery will be seen. So will the effect of all this on existing literary magazines.

"It must be the first time the word 'poem' has featured in a tabloid banner headline" was Michael Kustow's comment on the outcry in the popular press about Tony Harrison's "v.". Despite protests against its alleged obscenity, Richard Eyre's film of the poem was duly shown by Channel 4 late on Wednesday night at an hour usually reserved for weathermen and imported co-shows. Actually the poem's most startling four-letter word is "bard". Seeking some sense of alliterative communion with the butcher, baker and brewer in his family tomb, Harrison chose "bard" as the inscription for himself. It is a word which exactly catches the poem's tone of awkward nostalgia. "v." is a sentimental, if moving, lament for a vanished working-class culture. Eyre's film turns the carefully crafted antiphony between the well-preserved Northern dialect of the bard who went away and the spray-can slogans of the skinheads left behind into an imagery of personal displacements. Harrison is shown reading his poem to a cosy winebar audience, safely sheltered from the violent football terraces of Elland Road which are part of the poem's subject. Though the film is perhaps less subtle than the poem, the greatest sense of offence comes neither from the language, nor from the polemical graphics, but from the scenes of hopelessness and dereliction which they record.

The evening Iris Murdoch did not win her second Booker Prize she did, earlier, join the much more select group of Companions of Literature. This dignity was conferred upon Dame Iris at the Royal Society of Literature on October 22 by Roy Jenkins (who only two weeks before had made her an honorary D.Litt of the University of Oxford). Also so honoured were Sir Victor Pritchett, Sir Steven Runciman and Rosamond Lehmann. Unable through illness to be present was the Society's President, Sir Angus Wilson, himself a Companion. The companionship, limited to ten at any one time, was instituted in 1961, when the first five members were Sir Winston Churchill, E. M. Forster, John Masefield, W. Somerset Maugham and G. M. Trevelyan. The other living companions are Samuel Beckett, William Golding, Graham Greene, Stephen Spender, and Ruth Pitter (the poet so much admired by the late Lord David Cecil, C14).

Letters

'Life: A User's Manual'

Sir, – Gabriel Josipovici, in the *TLS* of October 30-November 5, alleges with "sadness" that Georges Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* has been "translated and edited extremely carelessly". I wouldn't wish to claim that the book is supernaturally error-free; but it has been translated and edited with rather less carelessness than it has been reviewed.

Your reviewer, a distinguished professor of English, believes that, having "anglicized" the name of the ink-eraser "Héphas" to "Kansell" on page 186, I should also have transposed the location of the shop selling the afore-mentioned rubber to an English town. The idea itself is absurd (should we put Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* in Bloomsbury? translate *Hard Times* to the Auvergne?) but the instance is even absurd. I didn't need to translate "Héphas" to "Kansell", because "La Gomme Héphas" in Perec's French, is borrowed from the "clever substitution" made by the French translators of James Joyce, for the passage in *Ulysses* which reads: "I am hastening to purchase the only reliable ink-eraser Kansell, sold by Hely's Ltd., 85 Dame Street" (Penguin edition, p. 154).

Josipovici also believes that "someone at Collins Harvill" should have edited out the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, which, he claims, does not exist in Rome. I wonder whether he has researched all the other names in Perec's wonderful puzzle. Does he know if there is or is not a Polish village by the name of Szczyrk (p. 287)? Playwrights by the names of Quaitau (p. 494, French) or Malte d'Isilliere (p. 364)? Was there a chemistry book written by Polissowsky and Spianardel (p. 185)? Or a place called Swetham? A painter called U. N. Owen? Were there fragments of the Holy Shroud in Prague? In York? In Ayrshire? Perec's novel mixes fact and fiction in ways which delight readers. It's a pity your reviewer misses the fun; and it is ludicrous that he should be allowed to allege his own limitations as evidence of editorial carelessness.

Your reviewer's final misfire is his attempt to set Harry Mathews and me against each other as translators. He ought to do some research before venturing on to such technical terrain. Mathews did Chapter 74 at least in part because it is in a completely different style from the rest of the novel. This difference is quite intentional on Perec's part, and there is documentary evidence to that effect. The copy of the text annotated by Eugen Helmle, Perec's German translator and occasional collaborator, on the basis of long conversations with the novelist, carries, above the heading LXXIV, the following words: "Stilistisch völlig verschieden von den anderen [Kapiteln] und erzeugt ein wenig *Les Choses*" (Stylistically completely different from the other [chapters] and somewhat reminiscent of *Les Choses*). Second, the versions of Chapters 27 and 74 in the English book edition are not Harry Mathews's, but my reworkings of them as approved by him. Josipovici could have seen the differences at a glance had he consulted *Grand Street and Fiction International*, where Mathews's original translations were published in 1983 and 1985. I transposed the American spelling and vocabulary into English, of course; I also used Steegmuller's published English translation of the long extract from Flaubert's *Correspondance* which figures on pages 120-1 of Chapter 27; and I reinstated the textual borrowings from Mathews's own works which appear in Perec in translation but which Mathews didn't notice in French garb. Had Josipovici taken more care to read what he calls my "illuminating essays" (in fact I have published only one, in *French Studies* XL1, 181-94) he would have known that Chapters 27 and 74 contain extracts from Flaubert, Queneau, Calvino and from Mathews himself.

Three errors in the English edition have been brought to my notice by careful, if not eminent, readers. My teenage daughter spotted that the Hebrew *resh* on page 409 should be *daleth*; *Massachusetts* is misspelled in two places; and on page 88, line 15, "five" is a printer's error for "fifty", corrected in the US but not the UK printing. The publisher and the translator would be glad to have further corrections from readers; we are less free to regard *coquilles* as happy fortunes, as Perec most certainly did. About four dozen misprints in the *Life* de Poche edition (the 1985 Hachette reprint is an even less accurate text) were identified by me and checked back to Perec's typescript and manuscript before emendation; and a dozen textual oddities, ranging from left/right inversions to erroneous information (such as the claim made about St-Mark's-in-the-Bowery on page 258) were discussed with members of the committee of the Association des Amis de Georges Perec before I made my decisions on whether or not to "correct" the translated version.

One of the few well-informed pieces on Perec that have appeared in the British press concludes: "Never underestimate the cryptic cunning of this epic voyage" (John Wilde, in *Blitz*). Your reviewer should be more careful before accusing me and Collins Harvill of carelessness. The traps he has walked into were laid by a cunning greater than ours.

DAVID BELLOS.

Department of French Studies, The University, Manchester.

Antonio Tabucchi

Sir, – I was delighted to see the review by Anna Laura Lepsky in your issue of October 9-15 of *Il filo dell'orizzonte* by Antonio Tabucchi. Your readers may be interested to know that over the next few years Chatto and Windus will be publishing most of Tabucchi's fiction in English translation, starting with the collection of stories, *Little Misunderstandings of No Importance* (*Piccoli equivoci senza importanza*) in March 1988, *Indian Nocturne* (*Noiturno indiano*) – translated by the novelist Tim Parks – and *The Line of the Horizon* (*Il filo dell'orizzonte*) soon afterwards, to be followed by further titles in due course.

ALISON SAMUEL.

Chatto and Windus Ltd, 30 Bedford Square, London WC1.

Hopkins's Verse

Sir, – When a judicious and sensitive scholar has spent a long time on a complex task she does not deserve an arbitrary and careless review; it would be a pity if any of Tom Paulin's mud stuck to C. L. Phillips's fine Oxford Authors edition of Hopkins.

Neither the review (August 14) nor the subsequent correspondence emphasized the importance of the book's innovations, which make it the most distinguished edition since that of Robert Bridges in 1918. This is the first that contains all Hopkins's poems, and the first to print them in chronological order; Bridges's desire to introduce his friend's difficult work in an amenable way meant that it was impossible for the readers of the first four editions of *Poems* to make out the order of composition and read the poetry as a meaningful continuum. Hopkins readers will receive a salutary shock from the new and strange emulsion in Dr Phillips's book of well-known poems with unfinished trivia, Latin verse, little-known scraps of versified prayer, translations of Shakespeare songs into Greek, and fragments of plays.

As regards the texts, there is less room for argument than in previous editions. They are reliable and up to date with current textual knowledge; the latest-known version is used, which, representing the poet's final choice, is the most obvious criterion. After the accumulation of notes by several editors in later editions the single fresh voice in this book is welcome; it always allows Hopkins's voice pre-eminence.

Whereas the book contains all the poems, it has room for only a selection of the prose. Everyone would make a different choice of Hopkins's under-known letters. It is unfair to criticize an editor who has space for printing only twenty-eight out of a maximum 400-odd very well-known ones (the "Communist" letter, which might appear to support an inter-temperate personal theory (Hopkins's "loving egalitarian curiosity").

To my knowledge C. L. Phillips's book has already proved invaluable to both Hopkins scholars and college students, and it will undoubtedly become the standard edition.

NORMAN WHITE.

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A History of Transylvania

Sir, – Dennis Deletant rightly points out (Letters, October 16-22) three major assertions in *Erdély Története* (History of Transylvania) which Norman Stone left unchallenged in his review (October 2-8), despite historic evidence to the contrary. Space does not permit me to indicate a great number of others but two of them, of which I have documentary evidence here in London, should be mentioned in the interest of historical fact.

"Only one prominent Romanian objected to Transylvania's union with Hungary [in 1867] – and he was a bad character . . ." writes Professor Stone. In actual fact, virtually all Romanian leaders protested, non-stop, after the adjournment of the 1863-5 Diet. The document prepared by the "bad character", George Bariuti, together with Ioan Ratiu, was personally presented by the latter to the Emperor Franz-Josef in Vienna, who received him on December 31, 1866, despite strong opposition from Count Haller, the Imperial Chancellor for Transylvania. It was signed by 1,493 "intellectuals". Even Metropolitan Saguna and his followers were opposed to the Union. They only refused to sign in the belief that compliance with the Emperor's wishes would bring justice to the Romanians.

The chapter on the "Memorandum Movement", if anything, less mindful of the truth. It says that it was "pressure from the young" that forced the Romanian National Party to present a Memorandum; that the decision to do so "split the Romanian politicians into two camps"; that "a very sizeable section of the top Romanian class" ("társadalom vezetői") did not back this action (ie, the presentation of the Memorandum); that "in order to cover up the disunity in the Romanian camp Romanians opposed to the Memorandum were hired for the defence". It also says that the vast majority of the jury found the accused guilty, as did two of the three judges "who wished to condemn the spirit of the Memorandum as well as the mentality of the accused, thus giving satisfaction, not only to Hungarian nationalism, but to the wishes of the Romanian National Committee who sought the confrontation" (emphasis mine). The fact is that virtually the entire Romanian nation enthusiastically supported the Memorandum movement, not only in Transylvania, but through the Cultural League in the Old Kingdom as well.

What is most worrying about this beautifully produced, massive work, however, is that it appears to be no more than the deliberate re-stating of the long-cherished history of Transylvania as the Hungarians see it.

ION RATIU.

34-62 Regent Street, London W1.

The Baader-Meinhof Group

Sir, – Anthony Glee's review of Stefan Aust's book *The Baader-Meinhof Group* (October 16-22) suffers from four fundamental faults.

The first fault is that Glee deals only with the English translation and not with the original edition of the book, and so fails to understand the name and nature of the organization in question. He refers to the "Red Army Faction", as the title of the organization appears in the English translation (and indeed in most English discussion of the subject). The correct term is of course "Red Army Faction", as it appears in the German original, and the distinction between the two terms is crucial in left-wing vocabulary. Then he says that Aust prefers the term "Baader-Meinhof Group", although "gang" is far more accurate". Aust actually prefers the more neutral and more accurate term "Baader-Meinhof Complex", as in the original title of the book, and the term "gang" is actually far less accurate, since the people involved were united by much more than mere bravado or greed. To miss this is to miss the basic problem of the group.

The second fault is that Glee fails to understand the ideology of the group, which may be unpleasant but must nevertheless be taken seriously. His ambiguous reference to "its anarchical system of ideas" – reinforced by the heading given to the review, "Propaganda of the

the deed" – is doubly misleading, because its ideology had nothing to do with anarchism, and was quite well organized. He sneers at "The Urban Guerrilla Concept" and other statements by the group but he can hardly have read them and they clearly belong to a perfectly recognizable and coherent tradition. The ideology of the group was an application of Marxism – heretical, perhaps, but still undeniable – to post-war imperialism and consumerism, an attempt to bring the experience of the (very successful) rural guerrilla campaigns in China, Cuba and Vietnam into the (very different) context of the urban situation in the West. Hence the obviously Marxist tone of the arguments, the overwhelmingly Marxist origin of the quotations (above all from Mao), and the close interest in current events in Vietnam and the Middle East and in parallel developments in Latin America. To miss this is to miss the theoretical problem of the group.

The third fault is that Glee fails to understand the background of the group. He calls Aust's book a "gripping and graphic account", but he doesn't seem to have read it very carefully. He says that Jillian Becker's *Hitler's Children* "seems to have been a prime source for Aust", but Aust has actually been far closer to the material than Becker and has no need to use her book (which is anyway not taken seriously by anyone with any knowledge of the subject). He says that it is hard to pin-point "what spawned the Gang" – a revealing use of language – and then refers only to three of its leaders. But although Aust's book is journalistic in the bad sense – excessively detailed and entirely superficial, without any evaluation of material or discussion of its implications – it does provide ample information about the context of the late 1960s and early 1970s in which left-wing discontent in the socialist, pacifist and religious movements led to the emergence of the extra-parliamentary opposition, and right-wing reaction to this phenomenon led to the adoption of the policy of armed struggle. To miss this is to miss the practical problem of the group.

The fourth fault is that Glee fails to understand the place of the whole episode in recent German history. He says that it "constituted the most serious domestic threat to the political legitimacy of the Federal Republic" and that "West German democracy . . . finally came of age . . . when the politicians began to break the Gang by the systematic use of security and counter-intelligence personnel". This seems a curious way to describe a situation in which the authorities had taken on vastly increased powers, more than four million people had become criminal suspects, censorship and the job-ban had become the norm, and terror on both sides had become the order of the day. The fact is that the State needed the terrorists as much as the terrorists needed the State, and the mutual paranoia of the two extremes threatened to polarize society to breaking point. To miss this is to miss the final meaning of the group.

NICOLAS WALTER.

88 Islington High Street, London N1.

A Powell Album

Sir, – Andrew Motion, in his review of *The Album of Anthony Powell's Dance to the Music of Time* (October 23-29), is disappointed to find a representation of Rosie Manasch as "a lady in a harem". The dedicated reader of Anthony Powell's twelve novels will recognize the visual reference. The Album provides the relevant passage:

She looked quite out of place in this setting; intended by nature to dance veiled, or perhaps unveiled, before the throne of some Oriental potentate . . . or occupying herself behind the scenes in all the appetising labyrinth of harem intrigue.

ALLA WEAVER.

Thames and Hudson Ltd, 30-34 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1.

Boyd Hilton's review (October 16-22) of Volume Three: 1838-1841 of Benjamin Disraeli's *Letters*, edited by M. G. Wiehe and others, should have included in the publication details the information that the book, although published by University of Toronto Press, forms part of the Disraeli Project, under the General Editorship of Dr Wiehe, of Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario.

Belgrade notes

James Campbell

Irony, not the Iron Curtain, is what keeps East and West apart in Europe. For the native English speakers among the fifty or so authors congregated in Belgrade at the end of October for the 24th International Writers' Meeting, the immediate problem was one of nomenclature. They had touched down in Yugoslavia under the pretext of discussing "The Myth of the Cultural Hero", only to discover that they could not understand the question. In Serbo-Croat, and perhaps in the majority of Yugoslavia's fifteen other official languages, the concept of "myth" has little of the ambiguity it now has in English; where it has developed several different meanings, at least two of them contradictory. Were they talking about a legend, a truth, or a fallacy?

"Cultural hero" presented even greater difficulties. It became clear once we were into the opening plenary session that when the Serbians spoke about a cultural hero they meant it – in earnest. The hero of the moment is Vuk Karadzic, poet and language reformer, whose bicentenary falls this year. Several distinguished local representatives, including Alexander Petrov, President of the Writers' Union, and the poet Desanka Maksimovic, heaped praise on Vuk in a manner certain to bemuse Western writers for whom the only heroes are anti-heroes. It also prompted the suspicion that this notion of the cultural hero was being granted so much air because other, more pertinent matters could be given none.

At a party given in the Serbian Writers' Union

to open the conference, I met poets and novelists from most of Yugoslavia's six republics, from Romania, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and from many Western European countries. But the question seemed urgent: where was that most ironic of cultural heroes, the émigré writer? Where, I asked Mr Petrov, was, for example, the troublesome Yugoslav novelist Danilo Kiz, now resident in Paris? "He could come if he wanted to." And what about the Russians? "Vladimir Voinovich almost came last year. We invited him but he had to pull out. Others have been asked. We'll ask them again next year; maybe they'll come then." But the writer and translator Svetlana Slapjak was less hopeful. "They'd love them to come, but they wouldn't accept the invitations. And anyway, if they did, there would always be somebody, on some committee somewhere, to ask: 'But whom do they represent?'"

Every conference ought to be distinguished by a walk-out, but in that respect this one was disappointing. Ms Slapjak complained in private that the event was in a way censored, since "personal constraint is exercised: there are things they just won't talk about", which provoked a few liberal consciences but prompted no firm action. The Slovenian poet and translator of Shakespeare, Milan Jesih, declined to attend anything official after the opening session, making an impressive stand in the bar. The Canadian novelist John Ralston Saul refused to participate in the group discussion with William Styron, but this was more a protest against technology and hype, since Styron spoke via satellite transmission from the United States. The conference's great American

novelist gave a performance of heroic uncertainty, resorting to silence to deal with questions which opened with lengthy preambles ("It is a great honour" etc) but closed with a bite, and confusing his far-away hosts by referring to "the great nineteenth-century cultures of England, France and the Soviet Union".

Once the obligatory homages to Vuk Karadzic were out of the way, the speeches moved from the traditional notion of the cultural hero to a modern version: the place of the self in a society which puts it in jeopardy. The Soviet poet Vyacheslav Kuprianov spoke of the writer's need to make his work a shield; Katerina Zarocosta, a writer of short stories from Athens, unravelled the contradictions besetting the modern Greek in search of a hero in the ideal city, where youth, named after Hercules and Ulysses, worships Madonna and Tom Cruise; John Ralston Saul spoke of the debasement of language, tentatively proposing that the purer the statement, the more vulnerable it is to corruption.

These themes were replayed offstage, where the alternative view was developed further – the writer as outlaw. There is no motive for participating in a society which denies the individual the opportunity of exercising his faculties at large, as there can be little justification for joining discussions if certain topics cannot be discussed and if the most worthy participants are not present. The most plausible hero in such a situation is the subversive; he gave serious pleasure, then, to discover, as the meeting was brought to a close, that the Nobel committee had granted their award to the exiled Joseph Brodsky.

continued on page 1233

Sin and blight

Patricia Craig

MAURICE LEITCH
The Hands of Cheryl Boyd and other stories
144pp. Hutchinson. £10.95.
0091726128
Chinese Whispers
71pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
0091727278

Things go wretchedly wrong for the people in Maurice Leitch's stories, who never have the nice time they have anticipated. This author is adept at evoking a mood of dust and ashes. *The Hands of Cheryl Boyd* (which contains eight stories in all) opens with a Northern Irish schoolmaster looking forward to a bit of lanky-punky with a young Nigerian woman visitor to the province ("Black is the Colour"). As he gets closer to her, he finds her gaiety – the quality that had attracted him – has evaporated, and in its place is a dismal self-preoccupation and a catalogue of personal miseries, very hard to take. It's all joyless, in Leitch's world: drinking, copulation, whatever had seemed charged with allure in prospect. In "Bedroom Eyes", a seedy figure – master of ceremonies in a London Irish pub – pulls off the latest in a line of routine seductions, only to find himself in the bed of an aggrieved and capricious woman. We are spared no detail of much-washed Acetex undergarments or goose-pimpled backs. In "Monkey Nuts", the illegitimate, Northern Irish daughter of a GI sets off for Pennsylvania on the trail of her progenitor. It's a quest, we know, that isn't going to end in an open-armed reunion. By the end of the episode, middle-aged Myrna is back where she started, only in a worse frame of mind. Leitch sees to it that his characters' facile expectations are not fulfilled.

"Where Are You Taking Us Today, Daddy?" has a well-meaning father – divorced – with a weekly obligation to entertain his two small children. He's taking them fishing, that's what, and never mind if the jam-jar gets broken, an unsafe bridge has to be negotiated, and tensions arise between father and offspring. A more topical threesome is featured in "Happy Hours", an IRA informer and his two police escorts, packed off to a Spanish resort out of harm's way – for the time being. Reno, the informer, isn't left with any illusions regarding his eventual destination. "Green Roads", a very resonant piece of writing, contains yet another trio – an army lieutenant, corporal and private – whose Land Rover comes to grief in a Northern Irish bog, stranding them for the night. For one of the three, it is indeed the end of the road. This is a story about continuity, retribution, those caught in a deadly, recurrent cycle of events; it's full of suggestiveness without being in the least unclear, which is not always true of this author's work. Sometimes, in his fiction, an action is recounted whose significance is withheld from the reader; instead of economy, a more usual characteristic of Leitch's writing, we find an unintelligible shorthand. In "Green Roads", though, the elements of the narrative pattern are distinctly set out – Ireland, violence, history, *malaise* and all.

Even though his characters generally end up in lower spirits than they started with, Maurice Leitch guards against dispiriting his readers: a kind of muted, bitter humour gets between the tedious, squalor and lankyness he goes in for, and their demoralizing effect. In the title story of this collection, indeed, a note of near-exaltation is sounded, as Leitch takes two separate topics and brings them into striking juxtaposition. Cheryl Boyd is a young disabled girl, more or less confined to a wheelchair, whose pretty hands aren't kept from picking and stealing. We start with Cheryl and three unwelcome, one, at least not quite so, gleefully embarking on a boat of shoplifting. "All four defendants went into Wellworth's store and stole a bottle of shampoo, a box of Milk Tray, a packet of hairdries and a bunch of grapes, total value £3.142." The case, when it is reported in a local newspaper, makes a considerable impact on a young religious enthusiast with a bad complexion, "whose mission in life was to bring salvation to this town of fifteen thousand odd souls". The rest of the story concerns the spry evangelist's awful single-mindedness in pursuit of his repentant sinner.

his testifier to the desirability of good living – complete with wheelchair, tambourine and spotless pair of hands for picturesque effect, hands that "once . . . dabbled in sin".

Chinese Whispers (a Hutchinson novella) is set in a Northern Irish asylum, once a family mansion, with a high surrounding wall dating back to the 1840s, the Famine years, when its building was undertaken as a form of relief work for the starving poor of the locality. The mansion then became a poorhouse, before ending up as an asylum; the wall, Leitch tells us, is still known locally as the Poorhouse Wall, and remains a perpetual reminder to the townspeople of past afflictions and injustices. These facts have some bearing on the present-day story, though not, perhaps, as much as the publishers claim, when they invite us to take the whole thing as a metaphor for Ulster and its troubles. Are they implying that the province is inhabited by a bunch of loonies? It's hard to see that the inmates' idiosyncrasies have any significance for Northern Ireland in general, even if one of them is an ex-priest in the grip of priapism, and another – acting out an intermin-

Forgotten trade

Savkar Altinel

YASHAR KEMAL
The Birds Have Also Gone
Translated by Thilda Kemal
122pp. Collins Harvill. £8.95.
0001270528

Turkey's periodic Nobel Prize candidate Yashar Kemal has always striven to push the frontiers of the novel back into the realms of myth and fable. *The Birds Have Also Gone*, ably translated into English by his wife Thilda as usual, is very much a product of this effort.

The book revolves around the charming (and now, alas, all-but-forgotten) Istanbul custom of buying caged birds and setting them free with a prayer asking them to secure a place for their benefactors in Heaven. The three protagonists, Semih, Hayri and Süleyman, urchins from the working-class district of Fatih, discover the "fly and be free" trade is not what it used to be, after having sold a precious rug belonging to the mother of one of them to raise money for a net and cages. There are some among the old, and among those who have just migrated to Istanbul from the countryside and not yet been infected with urban hardness, who will still pay to free a bird; but, by and large, Istanbulians have forgotten their traditions and are indifferent, when not actually hostile. The boys are thus not only unable to buy their rug back but cannot even afford to feed the

Affirming, aglow

Helen Byatt

CAROLYN SEE
Golden Days
196pp. Century Hutchinson. £10.95.
0712611614

Writing about nuclear war comes out of fear, but never, for Western writers at any rate, out of experience. The event itself seems beyond expression; as Martin Amis writes in *Evening's Monsters*, "Language cannot live with this reality." Carolyn See approaches the problem from a different angle in *Golden Days*. Her post-nuclear narrative finds that words and thoughts which belonged to the pre-nuclear world are defunct. But writing back from this point is a tall order, and it is not one that Carolyn See meets: the random confusion between past and present in this novel makes carriage of her narrative.

Los Angeles is decadent and decaying in the pre-nuclear 1980s. The narrator, Edith Langley, flits about in her memory, gathering up a series of marriages, meals, seminars and parties. Occasionally we recognize a place we have been before, but we are mostly unaware of any direction. It is also difficult to distinguish the other characters. Among them is Lion Boyce, pink-skinned and clothed in white, who sees the universe as "Cosmic Jello". He provides a

able failure to communicate? – goes through the motions of dialling imaginary telephone numbers.

Kenny, who lives in a mobile home in the hospital grounds, and isn't a well-adjusted individual himself, is in charge of a group of madmen (and one woman), and gets along fairly well until a disruptive outsider is added to the group, and deterioration begins to set in – taking odd forms. A mysterious beer-can falls from nowhere, landing on Kenny's innocent roof in the middle of the night. His charges no longer want to play the games he has organized to keep them cheerful. A colleague tries to show him pornographic pictures, and taunts him for his lack of interest. His group, when they're packed off out of doors to get a breath of air, stumble on something nasty.

One of the games initiated by Kenny is Chinese Whispers; distortion, you could say, is the theme of this Leitch novella – distortion of the senses, intellect, moral outlook, social organization or whatever. Leitch – an accomplished and purposeful author – is still at the business of scrutinizing blight.

birds they have captured or, for that matter, themselves, and the enterprise ends in disaster, causing the anonymous narrator to remark:

And before me there rose a memorial to the callousness and decadence of Istanbul town, to the oblivion of its past, of all that was human, to the loss of many many things, a memorial made with the heads of hundreds of tiny birds.

Kemal writes with the utmost directness and simplicity; indeed, he is the only Turkish novelist, and one of the few novelists anywhere, who could have attempted a book of such transparent symbolism. Nevertheless, he has not been entirely successful. Suffering from an excess of sentimentality, *The Birds Have Also Gone* reads at times like a cruel parody of his best work. Even the descriptions of Istanbul, the city which Kemal has lived in for the past four decades without learning to love, and which he can normally make appear the epitome of all that is wrong not just with modern Turkey but almost with humanity, are lacking in force.

The mood of nostalgia which pervades the book, too, is oddly appropriate. There are signs that the traditional hold of the Left over Turkish intellectual life is now weakening – which means that Kemal's fiction, with its rather basic "Marxism", may come to be regarded as being a little *passé* in his native country. What he purveys, however, is sufficiently colourful and exotic to ensure the continuation of his reputation abroad.

prophetic but unhelpful vocabulary to guide us through these troubled times. If we are "out-flowing, clearing, imaging, affirming", it will be all right because each of us will be "a blazing sun of infinitely abundant energy flooding forth the limitless treasures of light for the good of one and all". If this is ironic, one needs to be finely tuned to Californian idiom to recognize it.

Lion becomes increasingly symbolic of an inner capacity for survival. Edith's best friend, Lorna Villanelli, represents something similar, but it is a particularly female survival instinct. A hard-nosed faith healer, she is offered as a positive alternative to "these grim-lipped men jerking at their missiles". This ranting feminism sheds no new light, and the reader is left in a murky, dismembered world.

Life in the aftermath of the Bomb is described more aptly; but Lion's language creeps back as an affirmation of optimism. Pre and post-nuclear vocabulary are unconvincingly the same, though we are asked to take it on trust that their meanings are subtly changed. Edith describes post-nuclear Jello: "Our Universe is dynamically aglow with Radiant Healing and Prosperity Energy. We are aglow with Radiant Health." See urges us to believe in a New Beginning, but her evidence is insubstantial; Amis is more persuasive when he says, quite simply, "the post-nuclear world would seem to be the natural one".

Human killings

Mark Casserley

ANGUS WILSON
The Collected Stories
414pp. Secker and Warburg. £12.95.
0436576120

With one exception, published in 1980, these short stories all come from the first decade of Sir Angus Wilson's forty-year career. Indeed, twenty-three of the thirty-two stories appeared in the first two volumes, in 1949 and 1950. This book is therefore an opportunity to experience that remarkable debut once again. It is easy, given the hindsight provided by subsequent achievement, to feel that a writer's early work already possesses an out-of-the-ordinary quality, but with Angus Wilson this is really so. The aggression of his satire, backed as it was by remarkable powers of mimicry and insight, was noted at the time (the early Angus Wilson was described as a "human killer"), but perhaps what stands out now is the force and self-definition of his narrative persona: here was a writer who had found his voice and his subject. Like the more recent example of Ian McEwan, Wilson made a sharp and distinctive first impression through the medium of the short story; and now that his stories are collected together, the effect is not one of sameness but of a bold diversity of means and material.

It is not that any of the stories are free from the omniscient narratorial presence, but the presence is that of a showman revealing his grotesques. The reader is treated to an exhilarating bird's-eye view, one that combines mobility with penetration, so that the motives of, for example, the group of people who make up "The Crowd" (in "A Bit Off The Map") are mercilessly exposed. Similarly, Wilson alternates at will between first and third-person narratives (as in "Necessity's Child"), to provide yet another perspective on an individual's beliefs and susceptibilities, or provides multiple temporal frameworks, as in the two points in his life from which Jeremy, in "Significant Experience", reviews the end of his affair with Prue. Wilson is a master of foreshadowing, as "Mother's Sense of Fun" reveals, since the awfulness of Donald's mother, and his relationship with her, are both conveyed in Wilson's narrative of their last week together.

There are, though, themes common to these stories, and family relationships is one of them. They suggest repetitive, unending but ineffectual attempts to cope with some shameful or distressing past, or with a present for which the characters find that they are ill-equipped. An outsider may bring this long-standing condition into relief, as does Elspeth, a malign catalyst in "Fresh Air Fiend"; or a crisis or some set-piece event is used to unravel the preexisting scheme of things, as in "Union Reunion". In coming to terms with the present and the future, Wilson's characters are hampered by the outdated intellectual baggage they have to carry; but the generation who are to succeed them have already developed their own set of ideas, or returned to the ones their parents had abandoned. "Such Darling Dodos" and "Ten to Twelve" are examples here, but operate in different ways, with the latter story, from *A Bit Off The Map* (1957), appearing more distanced and objective, and with a foreboding that really needs the context of an Angus Wilson novel, such as *No Laughing Matter*, to be developed fully.

It's clear that Wilson's primary energies, by the time his last volume of stories appeared, were directed into his novels, and this is nowhere more apparent than in his handling of narrative contingency, or fictitious mischance: in the title story, the accidental meeting of Kenny, disappointed by The Crowd's inability to give him the answer to life, and the mad Colonel, on Hampstead Heath at one a.m., is carefully explained as a consequence of certain events in Colonel Lambourn's life. It is this delighted manipulation of his inventions that points the way to the work of the novelist, just as much as the remorseless lucidity with which he catches social and intellectual habits and habits. But the amplitude of Angus Wilson's later work ought not to diminish the impact of the stories: they have a vigility all their own.

Richly perverse

John Melmoth

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH
Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes
189pp. Bloomsbury. £11.95.
0747500975

The shocks that Patricia Highsmith administers in her novels are short and sharp, titillatingly nasty and a long time coming. Protraction is her forte. The activities of Tom Ripley, who has appeared in at least four novels, make the point. For long stretches he is apparently content with his curiously prim and sexless life in Fontainebleau, polishing the harpsichord, staking the dahlias, reading Isherwood and Goethe. But then, just occasionally, he goes on a binge, belting *mafiosi* over the head with a hammer or staging distinctly gratuitous meetings with kidnappers in Berlin gay bars, while sporting full drag. Leaving aside matters of taste, this is all done with absolute seriousness and neutrality in prose of the utmost rectitude.

Highsmith's collections of stories appear to be a form of release after so much holding back. As titles such as *The Animal Lover's Book of Beastly Murder* and *Little Tales of Misogyny* suggest, the stories operate on different lines from the novels; they are less uplift, more knowing, perter, camp. *Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes* is a diversion, explicitly "fun to write. They remind me of the spoofs I wrote of school subjects . . . for my classmates' amusement." It is carnage and mayhem as usual, with no room to swing a moral imperative.

Although compelling, the title is misleading; there is nothing natural about the assembled catastrophes, many of which have political causes. "Washington" is a presiding influence, vague but malignant. "Operation Balsam: Or Touch-Me-Not" is set in the aftermath of events at Three Mile Island; the pusillanimous Nuclear Controls Commission and the government collude in dumping hot waste under a college football ground. "Sweet Freedom! A Picnic On The White House Lawn" indicts successive governments for their failure to deal with the mentally ill. Overcrowded prisons and asylums are compelled to expel their less colourful and dangerous inmates and fill the streets of New York, Chicago and Philadelphia with zombies, exhibitionists, ageing rapists and dim-witted murderers.

Highsmith is not, however, in any conventional sense a political writer. Her interest is less in the illegal dumping of nuclear waste

Disarmingly armed

Linda Taylor

TORIAS WOLFF
The Barracks Thief
101pp. Cape. £9.95.
0224024337

When the father leaves, at the beginning of this novella, family life is devastated at a stroke. The brothers, Philip and Keith, in their early teens, are instantly divided: Keith who cries all the time ("He could not stop grieving") is on the road to becoming a loser; Philip becomes hardened – he "learns to get along without his father, mainly by despising him".

In 1967, with the war in Vietnam at its height, Philip, whose grades are too bad for him to get into college, on impulse joins the army. His story is about rawness, symbolized by the needle-stung right hand of Lewis, a fellow-recruit and the archetypal boorish soldier: "It was beet red and so bloated that you couldn't see his knuckles anymore. It looked like an enormous baby's hand."

A raw recruit to the army and to life, Philip's character is defined by his actions towards and allegiances with others. He can't afford to support Keith in his misery because of his own frailty; he recognizes and realises Lewis's crudeness, revelling in his humiliation when found out as "the barracks thief"; he tentatively courts, and is spurned by, Hubbard, who grieves unashamedly for the death of close friends, who condemns the war, who is frightened of dying.

But Tobias Wolff is often kindest to the least likable, and weakest, of his characters: Lewis, the least likable and weakest of the

than the effects on individuals of working for an industry which requires them to lie about everything they do. Similarly, the release of long-term inmates may have been, as the American Psychiatric Association said, "a major national and societal tragedy", but the story in question is a cheery festival of fools, milked for its grotesquerie.

Nevertheless, Highsmith takes little trouble to disguise her antipathy to the Reagan administration. "President Buck Jones Rallies And Waves The Flag" escalates a domestic crisis, which bears a suspicious resemblance to Langate, into nuclear war. Buck Jones is Ronald Reagan out of Fluck and Law: "Congress be damned! I had enough of them when I ordered the mining of – What harbour was that?"

A number of other stories deal with live issues in the same teasing, amoral and idiosyncratic manner. The eponymous hero of "Moby Dick II: Or The Missile Whale" has all the destructive power of his illustrious predecessor, can bite off feet or ram ships with the best of them, in addition to making the case against whaling. "Nabul: Warm Welcome To A UN Committee" begins with a measured survey of post-colonial Africa but goes rapidly downhill when President Bomo (crazy name, worryingly comic monstrosity) accidentally causes the horrible deaths of his aid-rich visitors.

But it is the stories that strive for allegorical resonance rather than social relevance that prove the most beguiling. In "The Mysterious Cemetery", huge cancers push their way above ground in a paupers' graveyard while "Trouble At The Jade Towers" unleashes a swarm of giant cockroaches on the pampered inhabitants of a luxury apartment building on Lexington Avenue. Most pitiful and alarming of all is "No End In Sight". Naomi, the oldest resident of the Old Homestead Nursery and Rest Home, is 200 years old and as well as can be expected: nearly blind, deaf, edentate, incontinent, senile, insane and thoroughly unpleasant.

Patricia Highsmith admits that the most demanding part of the exercise was narrowing the field of potential topics: "I found an *embarras de richesses* of 'catastrophes' that the human race has, almost, learned to live with at the end of the twentieth century." Certainly, each tale has the sense of having been assembled with as much facility as conviction, and the fact that they are so obviously *divertissements* may damage their chances of being regarded as the real thing. Yet, given that each one is original, uncomfortable and perverse, it is hard to know what else might reasonably be asked for.

is's failures at whoring in the town are sympathetically followed; and he experiences the only moment of tenderness in the book. It is Lewis who is victimized by his fellow soldiers; and it is Lewis who gives Philip the most reckless memory in his life: the moment when, guarding the ammunition dump, he persuades Philip and Hubbard not to heed the warnings about a nearby forest fire which, if it had reached them, would have blown them to pieces. "It would have been something", though, says Philip.

The Barracks Thief is a book to be taken in all at once: the ingenueness of the narration and the vulnerability of the characters are disarmingly seductive. Wolff, like Lewis, will have nothing to do with soothing balm; he depicts every aspect of his recruits' burning prickly discomfort.

Chinua Achebe, whose novel *Anthills of the Savannah* (reviewed in the *TLS*, October 9, 15) was shortlisted for this year's Booker Prize, is among the fourteen writers, predominantly poets, who will take part in the Jubilee Commonwealth Poetry Reading at the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8, this Saturday November 7 at 7.30pm. This is one of a series of events celebrating the Institute's Silver Jubilee Year, and is being held in association with the British Airways which are announced this week; also reading will be Edward Kaimu Brathwaite, George Barker (whose *Collected Poems* is UK/Regional Prize-winner), Peter Porter, Gavin Ewart and Grace Nichols.

Heroically marginal

Roz Kaveney

MADISON SMARTT BELL
Zero db
179pp. 0 7011 3263 9
The Year of Silence
194pp. 0 7011 3238 8
Chatto and Windus. £11.95 each.

The heroin dealer moving between the law and the threat of rivals; the existential terrorist executing diabolical mass murderers and courting flaming extinction; the martial artist expressing grief by performing his *katas* in a suicidally high place: these are the figures that dominate much of the work of Madison Smartt Bell. To balance what might otherwise seem roneo frenzy, we have other figures – the harpsichordist practising the Goldberg Variations on a painted board, or the sound engineer playing with noiselessness. It is almost too neat that Bell's two new books, a collection of short stories and a novel which builds its sense of urban loneliness through a series of seemingly disconnected vignettes rather than through the thriller-like structures of its three predecessors, should contain in their titles (*db* is the stock abbreviation for decibels) an advocacy of that silence which was one element in Stephen Dedalus's prescription for the artist.

Not that exile or cunning are absent from Bell's fiction either, though exile here often seems to mean not living in Manhattan. A central suite of stories in the collection *Zero db* deals, not without some unashamed duplication of material, with survival during periods of withdrawal by unnamed male protagonists suffering from attacks of *anomie*. We learn how to eat in the dining halls of Princeton when interest in study and tuition cheques have ceased; how to make friends with the more than slightly crazed chicano hoods who share your Brooklyn apartment building; how to outsmart a landlord who is fiddling your security deposit. This seems, for the most part, to be

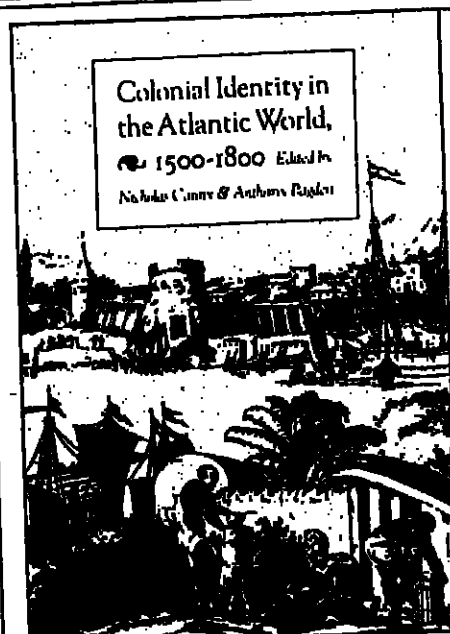
early work, and manages the tight-lipped seriousness of the novels without their excesses.

This group of stories is framed by experiments in other modes and other voices – two "Triptychs", analytical compilations of scenes with commentary, two tales of the drunken and feckless, both with the vague air of road novels, and a novella about an officer survivor of Little Big Horn driven to death by a suspicion that an Indian who saved him in a blizzard might be the better man. Whether the Black Hills of Dakota are an appropriate location for existential *Angrst* is an open question; but even when he courts absurdity, Bell maintains his vigour and verbal precision.

The Year of Silence moves expeditiously through various lives impinged on by the accidental death, from an overdose, of illustrator Marian. The characters in the sketches and tales which cluster round her death are central to Bell's world, however tangential or marginal their dealings with Marian or the burned-out and brutal policemen who report her death or the dwarf conman and pickpocket who finds her body; although perhaps Bell goes too far when he makes the harpsichordist flatmate of Marian's karate-instructor lover the brother of the self-combusting photographer vigilante in his earlier novel, *Waiting for the End of the World*. In a variety of voices, Bell portrays a milieu from the outside as well as from the inside; and in a final section shows Gwen, aware of the risks that destroyed her cousin, still finding in that society the strength she needs. Belatedly and productively, Bell allows heroism to the ordinary as well as to the outlaw male.

Close Company: Stories of mothers and daughters, edited by Christine Park and Caroline Heaton (298pp. Virago. £10.95; paperback, £4.95. 0 86068 887 9), brings together twenty-five stories by writers as diverse as Ama Ata Aidoo, Judith Cherniak and Zhang Jie, and includes new work by Margaret Atwood, Alison Fell and Jeanette Winterson.

Princeton University Press



Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800
Edited by Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden

Here is an ambitious attempt to explore and compare the concerns of identity that preoccupied colonial populations of the Atlantic world from Ireland to Brazil. How did French, Spanish, and Portuguese overseas settlements and English settlers in Ireland, Barbados, and North America establish themselves as peoples distinct both from their mother countries and from the indigenous populations of the colonies?

Individually these essays make fascinating reading on the various Atlantic colonies, and together they provide a comparative understanding of the highly pragmatic ways in which distinctive colonial identities were formed. Cloth: \$35.00 ISBN 0-691-05372-3

Four Middle English Mystery Cycles
Textual, Contextual, and Critical Interpretations
Martin Stevens

Martin Stevens examines the four extant complete cycles of Middle English mystery plays in light of the most recent research on the manuscripts, sources, and records relating to the medieval drama. In the first comprehensive treatment of all four of the cycles, he argues that the cycles, which as texts date from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, must be read as distinct works of dramatic literature, each with its own design, purpose, and execution. Cloth: \$44.00 ISBN 0-691-06714-7

Baron Thugut and Austria's Response to the French Revolution
Karl A. Roider, Jr.

Here is the first political biography of Baron Franz Maria Thugut, the principal Austrian opponent of the French Revolution. During every year but one of his tenure as foreign minister of Austria (from 1793 to 1800), Austria was at war with France, and Thugut was the man in Vienna most eager to pursue that war. In a fluent, engaging style this work explains Thugut's role as the first Austrian statesman to confront the Revolution. Cloth: \$55.00 ISBN 0-691-05135-6

AT YOUR BOOKSELLER OR
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O by OLIVER REYNOLDS

In the small town of Småpakke
not far from the border
in the early years of the century
the writer O
was being interviewed
The room had a view of the river
and as he spoke
the ferry could be seen
snouting its way across
to the Old Town
with a girl and a pram
and two tourists laughing
at the cheapness of the fare
and the handsbreadth
stretch of dull water
It's mostly I suppose
a matter of style
the writer said
His mind was wandering
First the ferry
and then this young lady
with her pen and notebook
and her hair up
showing the whiteness
of her curls
He crossed his legs
and addressed the ceiling
In 1718 there was
a complete change of style
in Prussian army uniform
known as the Stilbruch
Plainness
replaced dressiness
A tendril of hair
broke free and brushed
the page as she wrote
He stood up and walked
past her chair
to the window
Or take the two sorts
of houses in this town
The stone Valhallas
you see over there
were built for the so-called
plank aristocracy
the owners of the wood-mill
The wooden ones are for the workers
plain and simple
Had his fingers
touched her shoulder
The ferry was on its way back

The ferry was on its way back
I thought there was dirt or blood
crossing the surface of my eye
and blinked and blinked and saw
it was birds high up
swimming dots
Someone was playing a fiddle
as the ferry nuzzled to the quay
see-saw variations
on the national anthem
The old tunes
persistent as genes
will outlive us all
There's the schoolteacher
the town's human clock
walking home for lunch
and then returning on the dot
to the school inside the fortress
The fortress that won this place
a whole line to itself in the anthem
by withstanding siege
and sending the enemy
back across the border

Now it's us who slip over
for the summer sales or for a change
from a town that's had the luck
not to grow
You can tell the cars just returned
by the daytime blaze of headlights
stipulated by their law

Stipulated By Their Law
she would write
is a book of twists and turns
written in a denuded style
No
She should begin with him
Denuded
The horse had stopped
She was home
The driver asked for a fare
that seemed risibly cheap
and wouldn't be tipped
Father was outside
painting the flagpole
which was laid horizontally
from a pivot at the bottom
She followed the fresh white paint
to the tapering end
knots and grain still showing
this had once been a tree
The rope was coiled neatly
on top of the flag
folded small as a handkerchief
Mother has the coffee on
he said then resumed
his tongue-tip peeping out
pink and incongruously solid
amidst the smoke of his beard
Scratched music filled the hall
Her mother smiled at her and went on
waving her arms from the chair
half-conductor half-dancer
The kettle was nearly boiling
She lifted it off
Five minutes to cool
She stood there the whole time
quite still
music all round her like soft rain
still feeling inside her
a dipping and swaying
like someone newly arrived on land

Like someone newly arrived on land
the glassblower swung from side to side
clamping the tube to his mouth
and puffing from it a red bubble
molten with anger
and lengthening like slow elastic
The writer was often found
here in the Old Town
after one of his parties had ended
with the floor strewn with glass
Today though he wanted a present
Perhaps this bowl
which he could see
brimming with paper
quickly written envelopes and letters
He had it wrapped and hurried out
There was a live concert at four
to mark National Day
As usual there'd been flags everywhere
even on his taxi
He carefully put down the package
he'd send it tonight with a note
and then tuned in
He was soon away
jerking in his chair
he thought oddly
like a galvanist
What would a galvanist be doing
in the small town of Småpakke

Lessons of the flat style

Vincent Sherry

DAVID IGNATOW
New and Collected Poems, 1970-1985
332pp. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University
Press. \$30 (paperback, \$12.95).
08195 51155
RAYMOND CARVER
In a Marine Light: Selected poems
206pp. Collins Harvill. £11.50.
0002719088

"I wanted the spirit of the city in my poems
while I, as a city man, knew how to manipulate
the spirit in terms of its language." Thus David
Ignatow seeks to combine Walt Whitman's in-
clusive democratic spirit with William Carlos
Williams's commitment to speech idiom as
poetic material – the material to be rearranged
and shaped in what is, perforce, a process of
selection and exclusion. The citizen and the
artist locate rival if reciprocating energies, and
the poems they create may find the balance
difficult to maintain.

Mark Ford

GALWAY KINNEL
The Past
57pp. Secker and Warburg. Paperback, £5.95.
0436234114

Galway Kinnell is a powerful poet – occa-
sionally a rather too powerful poet – in the
bardic tradition of American verse. Although
associated with the back-to-the-earth "deep
image" pioneers of the 1960s, wild men of the
land like Robert Bly and W. S. Merwin, Kin-
nell at his best, as in the stunning long poem
"The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into
the New World", tends to work a more tradi-
tional vein of lyricism, and can sound impress-
ively like Hart Crane in full flight.

The Past is his first volume since *Selected
Poems* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982, and is
markedly different from his previous work: it's
more relaxed and meditative, less obsessively
physical. One of the great dangers with the
archetypal poetry Kinnell perfected in *Body*

It is, for Ignatow, a necessary balance. When
his Whitmanian stride is unchecked, as in the
"Invocation" that opens *New and Collected
Poems, 1970-1985*, he simply walks in Whit-
man's footsteps, blurring the original prints,
reminding us that political mysticism is hard to
imitate. Whitman serves Ignatow best when
subjected to the hard lessons of American
modernism. These were two, identified by Wil-
liams himself in a 1948 review of Ignatow's
Poems: the "straight look" of colloquial verse,
of course, but also that more complex, interest-
ing and elusive trait Williams repeatedly in-
voked, "the plastic of our [American] lan-
guage".

Ignatow develops this painterly or sculptural
analogy for his own poetry in what he calls its
"flat style", adapted from the techniques of
Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian. He handles the
idioms of the city as cubist images; fore-
shortening perspective, he cuts and fits the
material of speech to the measure of his poetic
line; the words become a vivid, impending
frontal plane. The reshaped cadences have the
capacity to delight: "Said a voice to me / from
the pillow / Ho Ho I am Bill Williams / Write

Rags (1968) and *The Book of Nightmares*
(1971) is the narrowness of its range; it aims to
sink "deeper than the level of 'personality'",
into some organic universal that celebrates
the most primitive rites of earth, and the
result can be as numbing as the endless epic
landscapes of Ansel Adams.

The Past, though, exhibits a new flexibility,
even a shy sort of wit. This seems partly to do
with the growing awareness of the domestic
that has begun to infiltrate Kinnell's poetry in
recent years. Kinnell is probably most famous
for his animal parables, vivid fantasies in which
he gorges on raw bear-meat for instance, and
even on bear-turds "sopped in blood", but *The
Past* reveals a more detached sense of natural
life, as in this wonderful description of his pet
dog out for a walk:

Now and then she bends
her spine down hard, like a dowser's branch,
over some, to her, well-known splashing spot
of holy water, at which she herself in turn
carefully besoms out a thrifty sprinkle . . .

In this book Kinnell's touch is often extremely

me a poem about yourself / Are you afraid? /
Get it down / Say it say it say it."

The "flat" style involves a temperament as
well as a technique. Cancelling the dominant
viewpoint includes a refusal to accept any phi-
losophical or religious perspective; it entails a
radical, Whitmanian openness to the variety
and particularity of things. Yet the nerve re-
quired to maintain that openness may have
failed with age; the older poet in this collection
finds it easier to occupy the moral high ground.
A semi-discursive voice also ignores the mea-
sure learned from Williams, running over the
lithe bounding lines, spilling the discourse.
Another sign of this open-ended prosiness, this
casual loquacity, is the increasing use of the
"conversation" or "interview" format for
poems.

An achievement which remains constant
throughout Ignatow's career is evoked by
the unexplained parable of "Requiem".
Remembering a father who wanted to be a
baritone, the poem itself verges on lyric; but
neither father nor son can break fully into
song. Ignatow's early commitment to reshap-
ing the cadences of speech was part of a vari-

ness about music, a reticence: when his poems
start into song, and fall just short, the voice
seems to resonate most, and most accurately,
with the emotional life.

Raymond Carver never verges on song.
Best known for his three volumes of short
stories, Carver writes in the tradition of good
prose, though not in the Flaubertian mode of
Pound or Ford; Carver is studiously uniterary.
He would be original, aboriginal: "My Crow"
dismisses literary images of that creature, from
Ted Hughes's to Homer's. He keeps his lan-
guage close to the folk idiom of the Pacific
Northwest, where he lives. His special gift is
the narrative in the vernacular, its relaxed
manner at its best when conveying a gra-
tuitous, apparently casual memory: "Where
this floated up from, or why, / I don't know.
But thinking about this . . .". From one stand-
point rhythmically inert, this laconic style has
the effect of forcing our interest away from the
verbal surface of the poems, allowing us to
focus on the event recalled or to experience the
feeling invoked. These events and feelings are
rich, moreover: a picaresque youth now owned
by memory and a mature response. Carver
knows the character and the value of this mat-
erial. Saying the least is not a deficiency but an
art: the verbal sparseness is consonant both with
the sense of adventure and the terse, virile
affection he permits himself. He is also a funny
poet, relaying the absurd as a matter of course
with a kind of dead-pan hilarity.

Carver's use of idiom gives traction to the
airiest of fancies. Talking to the dead in "Radio
Waves", for example, he relies entirely on the
common sense, the innate gravity of the com-
mon tongue. James Wright exposed the dan-
gers of this strategy even when he succeeded
with it: "Suddenly I realize / That if I stepped
out of my body I would break / Into blossom."
A flatly vernacular verse risks the absurd when
it seeks the heightening of poetry, and Carver's
voice sometimes fails to support the fantastic
event. Nor does he handle multiple or in-
tersecting narratives with skill: his syntax and
linguistic sensibility do not sustain the
complexities attempted in "Ask Him", a walk-
ing tour through a graveyard filled with stories
as varied as the dead. Despite his casual air,
there is a single-mindedness, indeed a relen-
tlessness about Carver's narrative instincts.
When he settles to one memory, he can draw
an extraordinary power from it.

Hymning the humdrum

Dean Wilson

DONALD HALL
The Happy Man
79pp. Secker and Warburg. Paperback, £5.95.
0436190737

In *The Happy Man*, his ninth collection of
verse, Donald Hall discovers a range and in-
tensity of voice one could hardly have guessed
at from most of his earlier work. Hall is one of
the most professional and committed of
American poets, and it is exciting to find de-
dication to his craft being so richly rewarded.
Hall grew up on a small farm in Connecticut,
and has written many poems celebrating the
simplicities of small-town America. *The
Happy Man* opens with a batch of these that
are frankly nostalgic, though not idyllic. A lit-
tle like Frost in this respect, he seems to take a
special delight in images of the superannuated:
old men crouched over winter fires, a dairy-
farmer found dead at his milk-pail, leaning
"into the side of his last Holstein", the last
dance, of a beheaded rooster before he's
plucked and boiled for a Sunday fricassee.

These are short stories developed swiftly and
unsentimentally, but in the longest poem in the
book, "Shrubs Burned Away", Hall tries his
hand at a full-length poetic narrative (whether
he succeeds or not is hard to tell, as this is only
the first section of a projected book-length
poem, to be called *Build a House*). His method
here is more complex, but basically there are
two main stories – each with various subplots –
intertwined together seemingly at random. In
one a young woman artist is pursued by night-
mares of grotesque physical dismemberment

inherited from an alcoholic mother; in the
other a character who might be out of Martin
Amis's fiction leaves his wife and children for
life on the booze in the motels of Hollywood.
Hall is aiming here, as the title suggests, at the
bleakest, least encumbered view of life he can
imagine, but the austerity isn't exactly Beckett-
ian:

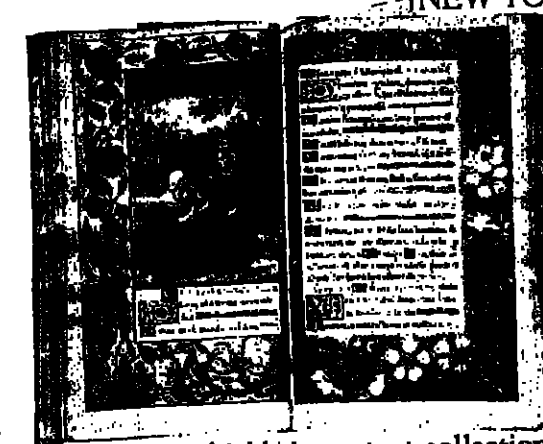
Studying a bikini'd
photograph on a matchbox, I dial BONNIE
FASHION
MODEL AVAILABLE at four in the morning
from my vinyl room, and the answering service tells
me

that Bonnie is out to lunch . . .
More unambiguously successful are the last
two sections of the book, "Men Driving Cars"
and "Sisters", and the male and female con-
trasts they develop. In these, Hall is especially
good at exploiting ordinariness, at making the
humdrum somehow satisfying. These poems
are so unspectacular they seem almost ex-
pected, the sort of poems about the sort of
things – a baseball-match, acorns, even one on
Keats and Fanny Bravine – that practically any-
one could write if they put their minds to it.
This obviousness, though, is probably Hall's
greatest strength. Like Hardy's, his poetry
often seems most relaxed and interesting when
it sounds most like a high-school exercise. His
has always been a malleable talent, but not all
his experiments have come off. He suffered
especially in the late 1960s when forms
loosened up, and he plunged into a wild sur-
realistic phase ("Buick of yellow leaves, sing
the peanut wheel") full of second-hand Gins-
berg and O'Hara. In *The Happy Man* his voice
emerges as distinctly his own in a language
unemphatic and flexible enough to deal with
the commonest experience.

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The final year

John House

RONALD PICKVANCE
Van Gogh in Saint-Rémy and Auvers
325pp. New York: Metropolitan Museum/
Abrams, \$35.
087099 4751

Vincent Van Gogh, in the final year of his life, spent in the asylum at Saint-Rémy and under the care of Dr Gachet at Auvers, seems to symbolize the modern creative genius - isolated from society, a prey to his own anxieties, and pouring out a stream of masterpieces which only found a real public after his suicide. His lifetime to the "real world" outside was his correspondence with his brother Theo in Paris, and at first sight his letters to Theo appear to provide an unparalleled entry to his creative world, with their detailed accounts of his activities and motives, and their seemingly artless linking of his paintings with his emotional states.

In one sense *Van Gogh in Saint-Rémy and Auvers* offers a welcome corrective to this view: Ronald Pickvance insists at the outset that these late paintings are "neither graphs of his so-called madness nor primarily indicators of his mental state", but rather the lucid products of an "informed and imaginative, interpretive and highly analytical" mind. In the brief introduction Pickvance mentions Van Gogh's wish "somehow to combine past and present, North and South, Rembrandt and Delacroix, Europe and the Far East", but he does not follow up this statement. Later, in discussion of the portrait of Trabeau, the head attendant at the asylum, he notes that Van Gogh compared it with an etching by Alphonse Legros and prints of the statesman Guizot, but blocks further speculation on these analogies with the comment that they "would seem to have no place in a Post-Impressionist's *muscle imaginaire*"; he then proceeds to discuss the portrait's colour - implicitly a more appropriate concern for a "Post-Impressionist" though unmentioned by the painter in his letter.

In part, the book's limited horizons may be the result of its origins as an exhibition catalogue, with a set of entries on individual pictures at its core, and certain key works inevitably absent. Yet, even in discussions of the paintings, Pickvance refuses to "remove individual pictures from their context and subject them to intensive scrutiny in an attempt to grasp their sources, symbolism and ultimate meaning". This "context" is the physical context of their making and the way in which Van Gogh grouped them for dispatch to Theo;

identification of these groups of paintings is the focus of Pickvance's detailed scholarship.

Their larger context, and the range and complexity of Van Gogh's cultural interests, are never brought to bear on the pictures. Even in discussing the often-interpreted "Starry Night", Pickvance does not summarize rival views of it, let alone seek to adjudicate between them. Discussions of Van Gogh's responses to external stimuli are of the most simplistic: one picture is "a Pont-Aven picture painted at Saint-Rémy", though it shows no clearer sign of the impact of Gauguin and



A pencil drawing reproduced from *The Seven Sketchbooks of Vincent van Gogh: A facsimile edition by Johannes van der Wijk* (329pp, Thames and Hudson £30, 05100182 X).

Lessons in survival

David Bindman

TOM PHILLIPS
A Humument: A treated Victorian novel
Revised edition.
367pp. Thames and Hudson £12.95.
050123484

Tom Phillips's *Humument* has not achieved the recognition it deserves since its publication in 1980. This is surely because of its unclassifiability, for it does not fit naturally into any section of a bookshop or library. It is in essence a comic novel in pictures, telling the story of the Platonic quest of the artist, who is represented by the bathetically suburban dreamer Bill Toge, and the pursuit of his muse Irma. It is also a personal commonplace book of a kind familiar in the seventeenth and eighteenth cen-

illustrations. Three introductory essays help to place the subject in its historical context: "The Sixteenth Century" by John Oliver Hand and "The Function of Drawings in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century" by W. W. Robinson and M. Wolff are serviceable; "Jan Gossaert and the New Aesthetic" by J. R. Judson is perhaps less useful, as the author gets into a predictable tangle over the meaning of mannerism. One or two errors should be corrected. In the entry for Bruegel's "Kermis at Hoboken" the inscription on the engraving after the drawing is mistranslated: *lauwen* means "to chew" not "cold", and the sense is that the peasants insist on holding fairs whether they have to starve or die of chewing or over-eating. The figures in Van Orley's tapestry design are not John V, Count of Nassau, and his wife but Henry III, Count of Nassau, and his three wives: the lady in the foreground may be identified, from comparison with other portraits, as his third wife Mencipe de Mendoza, an important patron of the arts. *The Age of Bruegel* will certainly be useful to specialists, who will find the entries and bibliographies invaluable. But it is doubtful whether the general reader will derive much pleasure or instruction from the text since the drawings are catalogued not in chronological sequence but by alphabetical order of artist. As an anthology of plates, the book is attractive and useful; but the selection of plates was governed by the availability of drawings for loan, and an anthology of the best and most interesting drawings of the period would be differently balanced.

Matters of fact and theory

David Carrier

INGRID STADLER
Contemporary Art and Its Philosophical Problems
152pp. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus. \$21.95.
0187975 3838

Most aestheticians have too little knowledge of the arts; and most art critics, even those who love to peruse quotations from philosophers, know nothing about philosophy. So, since recent art frequently raises philosophical issues, a book by a philosopher dealing with the philosophical problems of contemporary art could not be more timely. Although Ingrid Stadler is listed as the author of *Contemporary Art and Its Philosophical Problems*, according to the table of contents each essay in this collection of papers has a co-author. They discuss a very wide range of important issues which ought to interest philosophers: the role of the contemporary art market, and feminist art theorizing; minimalist art, photography, and the greatness of Jackson Pollock and Mies van der Rohe. The writing is clear and, though oddly mannered, free of jargon; the authors refer to a wide range of sources and their passionate concern about these issues is engaging.

What is so dismaying about this promising book is its cavalier attitude towards the facts. The "prize possession" of the Gardner Museum, Boston, cannot be the "Titian *Spanish Dancer*"; there is no painting by Titian on that subject. Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried do not think that "Minimalist . . . sculpture . . . surpasses all other styles or schools of approximately a century of Western abstract art", and David Smith, whom they do admire, was not a minimalist. Michael Fried's important critique of minimalism, "Art and Objecthood", which Stadler quotes and to which she seems to refer - her footnotes are confusing - was not published in 1982, but fifteen years earlier, in the era of minimalism; her bibliography gives another date of publication, also incorrect. Nor is her strictly philosophical argumentation more successful. Since Krauss's earlier and later views differ and "a proposition and its contradiction cannot both be true", it follows that "Krauss has effectively erased her contributions to art theory . . . Hegel and Wittgenstein both make different claims in their early and late writings, so it is difficult to see why a writer about art may not also change her mind when she sees new works or sees familiar works in a different way. In a later essay, a Kantian discussion of Pollock's originality, Stadler offers an example of the "originality of genius". In it Raphael breaks with the tradition in which "the Madonna had been depicted as reading her future in the 'Book of Prophets'" and "the goldfinch . . . remained as symbolic of the infant's message and martyrdom . . .". "Since a stroll through any good museum, or a glance at an introductory art survey text, will reveal that this statement is incorrect, only the very optimistic reader will then be willing to follow Stadler's critique of Elizabeth Frank's *Jackson Pollock* or to weigh her claim that Pollock perhaps did not paint masterpieces; "We are not yet convinced that the mysteries Pollock's work create serve to supplant our need for myths to live by."

Stadler's aim is to demonstrate that a rigorous philosopher who knows her Kant can clear up the confusions of writers about art, who indeed often reason poorly. But this goal seems hopelessly presumptuous when, for example, she tells us that "Pollock's mural-sized paintings are clearly not part of the history of painting, which took it for granted that painting is (and was) about telling stories without words"; as if Chardin's still-life works, Claude's landscapes or Braque's Cubist masterpieces were clearly not part of the history of painting. Unintentionally, however, Stadler has made a contribution to philosophy. According to Donald Davidson's Principle of Charity, "we can dismiss a priori the chance of massive error . . . it must generally be the case that a sentence is true when a speaker holds it to be". *Contemporary Art and Its Philosophical Problems*, I would argue, is a possible counter-example to this claim, a demonstration that massive error is indeed possible.

Running backwards

David Papineau

PAUL HORWICH
Asymmetries in Time
218pp. MIT Press. £20.25 (paperback, £8.95).
0262 081644

If you see a film run backwards, it looks weird. Smoke drifts back towards smokers, uphill until they flip themselves back on to branches. Disorder, dispersal and decay unravel themselves, and become as good as new. Of course backwards movies are just a trick. But what if the world were really like that? What if we were in a backwards movie, rather than just watching it? One possible thought is that in such a world the direction of causation would be reversed. Later events would characteristically cause earlier ones. The later disappearance of the smoke, or return of the pebble, or restoration of the apple, would be the explanation of why earlier events happened as they did.

But if the direction of causation were reversed, then presumably the mental life of people living in a backwards world would be different too. Memories are experiences caused by temporarily removed events. So in a backwards world we would presumably remember events like the pebble being in our hand, or the apple being on the tree. Similarly, we anticipate effects of present goings-on. So we would look forward to the ripples spreading out, or the apple rolling away. But then what's so backwards about the imagined world in the first place? Won't throwing the pebble be in the past, since it is in the direction we have memories of, and won't the ripples spread out into the future? In the end it seems as if the backwards world, the world in which earlier order decays into later disorder.

At issue here are the relationships between four different "arrows" that pick out a direction in time: the arrow of decaying order, the arrow of causal efficacy, the arrow from remembered events to current memories, the arrow from past to future. Paul Horwich's *Asymmetries in Time* is a detailed study of the relationships between these four and a further six related arrows in time. There are a number of notable previous works in this area, including Hans Reichenbach's *The Direction of Time* (1956) and D. H. Mellor's *Real Time* (1981). But Reichenbach's posthumous classic is not a fully finished work, while Mellor's book is relatively selective in the problems it deals with. Horwich's book has the virtue of offering a systematic treatment of the whole area, and is likely to be the standard work for some years to come.

Horwich is not a writer to sacrifice expository flow for technical detail, and there are occasional passages where he skates fast over thin ice. But in an area as potentially confusing as this, clarity is preferable to complexity. Certainly a number of chapters, like that on the direction of explanation, and on time travel and the dangers of "autofantasia", are highly suited to become required undergraduate reading. Horwich takes the dispersal of order to be the key to temporal asymmetry. Most philosophers of science reject this line, on the grounds that a world in which order accumulated instead of dispersing, a world like a backwards movie, would still be in perfectly good accord with the fundamental laws of physics. If a collection of smoke molecules ever did have the initial velocities and positions that they are portrayed as having in the backwards movie, then they would indeed all disappear up the cigarette.

But Horwich points out that an order-accumulating world would still be very odd. It would be very strange indeed for all the different smoke molecules to have just the co-ordinated velocities required for them to rejoin the cigarette simultaneously. And in fact we scarcely ever find such co-ordinated initial conditions in the actual world. Instead, we get chaotic initial conditions (the random movement of air molecules around the cigarette) which then give rise to co-ordinated "final conditions" (such as the related velocities of the separated smoke particles that come out of the cigarette). By focusing on this phenomenon of initial chaos, followed by co-ordinated consequences, Horwich is able to show that a number of other temporal asymmetries, in particular the accumulation of memories and the direction of causation, have the same source as the dispersal of order.

Horwich briefly considers possible explanations for the ubiquity of chaotic initial conditions in our world. He mentions the popular theory that this initial chaos is a result of the "big-bang" origin of the universe, and alludes to the intriguing corollary that in a "big crunch" the direction of time might be reversed. But, as Horwich is aware, these ideas are at best tentative. In particular, it is difficult to see how the essentially probabilistic requirement, that initial conditions should be randomly arranged, can follow from any particular facts about the actual history of the universe.

If there is one topic on which Horwich is less than convincing, it is the connection between rational action and causation. Twenty years ago the standard philosophical view was that an action is rational if it renders a desired outcome more likely. But there are cases that raise difficulties for this view. People who take out life insurance policies are more likely to avoid car accidents than those who don't (because they tend to be more cautious citizens anyway). But that doesn't make it rational to take out a life insurance policy in order to avoid car accidents. Having life insurance is good evidence that you will avoid car accidents. But it won't cause you not to have them.

A similar example is "Newcomb's paradox". Imagine you are offered £1,000 in a transparent box. The only catch is that you are also offered another, opaque box, in which you are told a magically accurate judge of character will have put £1,000,000 if you are going to refuse the first box, but will have put nothing if you are going to take the first box. You can take either or both boxes. Now, if the judge is any good, you are more likely to end up a millionaire if you refuse the first box and take only the second. But, as before, it makes little sense to choose an action, like refusing the first box, which can't have any causal influence on the desired outcome. Nothing you do now will affect whether or not there is £1,000,000 in the opaque box.

Most philosophers have concluded from these examples that the old "evidential decision theory" (perform the action that would be the best evidence for the desired outcome) should be replaced by a "causal decision theory" (perform the action with the best chance of causing the desired outcome). But there is a minority group who have mounted a rearguard action in favour of the old evidential theory, arguing that, when old decision theory is treated with sufficient care, this theory can avoid recommending causally inefficacious actions. Horwich takes an even more radical line. He agrees with these evidential loyalists that in most real-life situations the evidential theory can be made to deliver the intuitively sensible causal recommendations. But he argues that in certain special cases, like Newcomb's paradox, the evidential theory really does recommend that you should do something causally inefficacious. And that's then what you ought to do. You ought to refuse the safe £1,000, because it's then more likely that the predictor will have put £1,000,000 in the other box.

It is rather surprising, in the context of the rest of his book, that Horwich takes this extreme line. To most loyalists the attraction of the evidential theory is that it avoids the metaphysically difficult notion of causal direction. But *Asymmetries in Time* includes a detailed analysis of causal direction. Admittedly, it would be a further task to bring this analysis to bear on the logic of decision and the question of why causally inefficacious actions are irrational. But given the rest of what Horwich achieves, one would expect him to make the effort - if only to avoid the conclusion that one box can be better than two.

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In the wreck of patriarchy

Monica Furlong

LEONARDO BOFF
The Maternal Face of God: The feminine and its religious expressions
270pp. Harper and Row. £10.95.
0134024214

MIKE BAI
Lethal Love: Feminist literary readings of biblical love stories
141pp. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. \$25 (paperback, \$8.95).
025333237

SUSANNE HEINE
Women and Early Christianity: Are the feminist scholars right?
Translated by John Bowden
182pp. SCM. Paperback. £6.95.
0134024214

Feminist, and indeed anti-feminist, books are now fairly streaming off the pious printing presses. It seems only yesterday that Christian publishers used to groan if you offered them a book about women; now they apparently cannot get enough of the subject and we are bombarded by the sensible and the foolish, the original and the stale, the orthodox and the heretical.

The Maternal Face of God by Leonardo Boff is out of the top drawer of this sort of publication, parented by orthodox Catholicism with some Jungian genes wandering in somewhere. A Brazilian, and a liberation theologian, he looks back over the long centuries in which women have been silenced in the Church, and he feels uncomfortable and embarrassed. "There are two ways of refusing to accept woman. We may consider her infantile and therefore rightly placed under male tutelage. Or we may exalt her to heights such that her status and role in this world lose their reality and specificity." He quotes Balzac, "Woman is a slave to enthronement", and rejects such theories of domination of women in favour of "recip-

rocity" between the sexes (in Boff's definition a subtle and profound concept). He also explicitly rejects the Augustinian view that only in the male is human nature fully realized, with its corollary that realization for the female is only a function of her relation to the male.

As he sees it, the Church is living in the wreck of patriarchy, yet near to rescue by a new vision, that of the feminine. (This makes an interesting contrast to the Archbishop of Canterbury's recent analogy between the approach of women's ordination and the Titanic disaster.) Boff believes that Pope John Paul I was speaking prophetically when he announced, "God is Father, but above all, God is Mother." He enlarges on this, borrowing Jungian language:

Every indication exists that we are witnessing the emergence of one of the key archetypes of humanity's collective unconscious: the anima, in all its multiple manifestations. A like event occurs only once every several thousand years. . . . Within the institutional framework of the powers that be, the image of God flashes forth with a new face.

Up to this point, a Christian feminist, like myself, is more or less cheering him on, though leery of the mention of the anima because of Jung's sexist views of its counterpart, the animus. Jung thought that woman's struggle with her masculine side made her "obstinate and inept" (*Symbols of Transformation*). "A woman of a usually kind and peaceable disposition," he claimed, "becomes an argumentative, obstinate, narrow-minded shrew if it should come into her head to use a half-understood idea heard in a conversation six weeks or months ago" (*The Integration of the Personality*). (The implicit message of analytical psychology thus appears not to differ at all that much from the one conveyed to me by my mother forty years ago - "If you want men to like you, it is better not to argue with them.")

My heart sinks, however, when Boff goes on to identify the Virgin Mary, immaculate, pure, totally self-giving, as a kind of ultimate anima, she "in whom we see the feminine as

achieving its totality".

Jung himself believed that in the minds and hearts of men, the anima, or archetype of the feminine, took many forms - the coquette, the whore, the witch, the young girl, the wise old woman, to name but a few. Boff never mentions these colourful characters, but apparently identifies "the feminine" entirely with "the perfect mother". As the American theologian Beverly Harrison has noted, "the devoted, mothering, virginally asexual 'good woman', the only woman to whom Christianity [has] been able to relate", is simply the reverse picture of the wicked Eve, whom the patriarchs have always regarded with such unspeakable terror. It may, of course, be a transforming experience for men to discover an inner feminine self that is devoted and selfless, and we may hope they learn something from it, but for women the image of femininity as one of unremitting self-sacrifice has often been a crippling one.

Mike Bai's contention in *Lethal Love: Feminist literary readings of biblical love stories* is that the authors of the Old Testament see women as "victimizers", and to prove this she quotes Eve, Bathsheba, Delilah, Ruth. (One wonders why not Jael, she of the tent-peg, who might have given many a young man pause for thought.) Eve and Delilah are surely trouble-makers, but Ruth? the passive, hapless Bathsheba? Using a quite weird blend of semiotics, psychoanalysis, flow charts - with drawings labelled Safety, Danger, Confinement, Freedom - Bai has written one of the least comprehensible books I have ever been my lot to read, with chapter headings such as

"On the Margin of Anachrony: Paralepsis or the deviation from the straight path", "Juxtaposition, or Similarity behind Displacement".

I much enjoyed the part, however, where she says that Samson knocking the Temple down was *really* the act of pushing at his mother's legs in an attempt to get born. Could the book be a leg-pull?

Susanne Heine is a Professor in the Protestant Faculty of Theology of the University of Vienna. The publishers of her *Women and Early Christianity* warn us eager feminist readers that we may find her "sobering". Certainly she has a rather prim way with her. A distinguished scholar, with some feminist sympathies herself, she explores what other writers are saying about the way that, in spite of the theory of Christian love, women gradually found themselves edged out of an active role in the young Church. She is cool to the point of hostility towards a number of women scholars, and it seemed to me that she was plainly nervous of being lumped with the maverick feminists, who roam in and out of the theological bushes like highwaymen. She seems nervous that we might think she is a Gnostic or that she admires the angry outpourings of the post-Christian Mary Daly.

I did think she was a bit hard on Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, for being rash enough to hold that Jesus and Mary Magdalene might have been more than just good friends (I had wondered this myself), but she is right behind Rosemary Radford Ruether - the author of *Women Church* (1986) - which in this, the British Christian feminist neck of the woods, is as much in the mainstream as you can get.

Relating to the Gentiles

J. L. Houlden

JACK T. SANDERS
The Jesus in Luke-Acts
411pp. SCM. Paperback. £15.
0134024212

The author of the Gospel of St Luke and of the Acts of the Apostles is a favourite with the more relaxed kind of Bible reader, because he appears to be so straightforward, so sunny and rather secular. It takes only a little close attention to show that all three judgments are mistaken, and on no subject is it more false than his attitude to Jews and Judaism. Certainly he is not the least bit secular: Jews, Gentiles and Christians are viewed throughout in the perspective of God's historical purpose, centred on Jesus. And evidently he is not straightforward, for the elucidation of his attitude produces the most contrary assessments. As for his being sunny, this is precisely a basic point at issue. Was Judaism, for Luke, the essential and beneficent parent of the Church, with Jews forming the core of its early membership, a role marked only by the hostile activities of some leading Jews towards Christians, and above all in the execution of Jesus? Or was it the great enemy and the place of all faithlessness, in a portrayal relieved only by a devout minority of Jews, who attended Jesus' birth and responded to the earliest apostolic preaching?

As either interpretation is not implausible, much depends on how Luke's own situation is perceived. Whom was he trying to convince and what purposes were uppermost in his mind? Here too, numerous suggestions are in the field, but there is broad agreement that Luke's depiction of both the life of Jesus and the earliest years of the Christian mission is coloured by anxieties and causes belonging more to his day, around the close of the first century, than to the earlier period which they describe. The question of Christian identity in relation to Judaism was important in all Christian groups, and the New Testament gives evidence that almost every conceivable view was held in one quarter or another. Those views may be plotted on a scale of gradually and variously developing Christian awareness of differentiation from Judaism. At some point in the course of the process, hard to define, what is properly seen as intra-Jewish controversy becomes hostility between two distinct faiths.

Jack T. Sanders makes, with some difficulty, an interesting case for Luke's hostility to

Judaism and all its works. Apparently contrary strands are subsidiary to this overwhelmingly primary Lucan thrust, designed to show the Church's title to be Judaism's true heir. Faced still with Jewish opposition, Luke's real belief is that only Gentile Christianity is fully genuine, freed as it is from the bonds of the Jewish Law that still fetter even Jewish Christians.

Professor Sanders reads the account of Jesus' ministry in Luke's Gospel, as well as Acts, in the light of this picture. Thus, the Pharisees whom Luke's Jesus castigates for their narrowness are a sort of foreshadowing of the Jewish Christians of the later period, while the "good" sinners and outcasts, whose faith and humility bring them salvation at Jesus' hand, look forward to the Gentile Christians who alone believe on the "right" terms. It is not wholly easy to see how conscious Luke was of such a picture: it betokens a rather modern kind of literary subtlety if, as Sanders seems to suggest, it was deliberate. Open more clearly to the suspicion of anachronism is the levelling at Luke of the charge of antisemitism, admittedly in its most embryonic form.

In this account of Luke's work there lurks a certain disparity of method, a tension between two of the dominant approaches in modern New Testament studies, the historical and the literary. For the most part, Sanders's idea, in *The Jesus in Luke-Acts*, is to show what Luke actually had in mind in the conditions of Church life known to him. But he also shows us, most convincingly, phenomena that simply confront us on the page: most notably that it is in his narrative sections that Luke's favourable remarks about Jews occur, showing them divided in their attitude to Jesus, some tender and approving, others (chiefly leaders) hostile; whereas in the speeches the Jews as a people seem always to be condemned. Sanders shows this, but he does not venture a historical explanation: in effect, he asks us to absorb and appreciate it as a literary feature, taking its place in Luke's presentation as a whole. But whether the distribution between narrative and speeches was accidental or deliberate, the diversity does detract from the monolithic quality, as Sanders holds, of Luke's hostility to the Jews. The possibility must be entertained, that, on this as on some other matters, Luke was neither so clear nor so consistent as critics are over-determined to make him. Perhaps he was (perish the thought) - can evangelists be so? (pp. and muddled, subject to conflicting pressures and sentiments which deprived him of the luxury of a cool and lucid mind.

The British Council - a case for treatment

continued from page 1222

the World Bank. True, the core grant has shrunk from 46 per cent of turnover to just 29 per cent. But the increase in other revenues has enabled an expansion in overall business by 30 per cent in the same period. "British Council Ltd" is doing fine.

Take Egypt as an example. Here the Council's mission had its core budget cut by 15 per cent in the past decade. Yet a mixture of contract work and fees from the teaching of English has enabled it to double its local spending in real terms, and double its activity. There are certainly signs of strain: fewer scholarships and educational exchanges and obligatory complaints from Council staff as to why everything is really worse because of cuts. But it is hard to argue that Britain's cultural profile in Egypt is lower than ten years ago.

Indeed in some respects, the British Council is beginning to look like a model Thatcherite department. The "productivity" of each pound of subsidy has risen. It has become more market-oriented and is selling its services with great success. The Council waits that "the only real growth is taking place in activities which are funded by sponsors or clients". But does this shift in the source of funds, reflecting what appears to be a changing demand for its services, necessarily indicate impending catastrophe?

The Council's response is that a decline in core grant has reduced the money available for the sort of work traditionally associated with its overseas presence: arts work (now just 7 per cent of budget), its network of 120 overseas libraries and its representation in many European countries where contract work is not always available to cross-subsidize an office. It is "anomalous", the Council claims, that largely because of contract work, there are now larger programmes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Hong Kong than in France or Germany. Yet this anomaly is hardly apparent to those who might regard cultural relations with Western Europe as mostly covered through the private sector.

There must be a suspicion that Council officers rather enjoy the lifestyle and contacts with old friends just across the Channel - a syndrome reflected in the Foreign Office's own over-endowed west European embassies.

The British Council further complicates its life by drawing an eccentric distinction between cultural diplomacy and "cultural relations". The former has to do with Britain's interests abroad and is by implication somewhat tainted by selfishness and commercial opportunism. The latter is pure ambassadorship: what the Council's former director, Sir John Burgh, calls "the values for their own sake" (my italics). This role is seen by the Council's old guard as the apotheosis of cultural philanthropy, a sort of bilateral Unesco fulfilling Britain's historic mission to civilize the world.

Such a distinction between Britain's overseas interests; long or short term, and the propagation of "values for their own sake" cuts little ice among those wrestling with budgetary priorities. For once, even the Foreign Office is to be found on the tough end of the budgetary spectrum. Sir John Burgh got in a terrible tangle before the select committee by implying that "relations" were to do with long-term interests and "diplomacy" short-term ones. Since diplomats customarily define their own output as

the "long-term pursuit of British interests", one wonders how much longer a British Council "term" is than a Foreign Office one. The whole argument is in danger of degenerating into the arts lobbyist's plea: "Give me the money because I'm me!"

Public spending unsupported by objectives - qualified or unqualified - is out of fashion. And sloppiness is least excusable in the case of cultural diplomacy, where the benefits, financial and otherwise, are comparatively easy to express - much easier, for instance, than those of aid, or political representation. The Council has recently made strides down the objectives road. The "activity budget" of an individual Council mission has the sort of programme-orientation now advocated for all government departments. Such favourite milch-cows as English-language schools are squeezed to cross-subsidize less lucrative work. Opportunities for fee income are assiduously pursued. Sales of British educational goods and services are quantified. Publicity won for Britain is registered.

For all this, Britain's cultural diplomats are swimming in an ever larger pool: "informal diplomacy" is now a growth industry. British interests abroad are no longer greatly influenced by the ambassadorial pomp, the chanceries, the ceremonies and cocktail parties of its Rolls-Royce embassies. International relations are a matter of summit conferences, ad hoc meetings, multilateral organizations, jets, mass media and specialist journalism, telephones and telexes. Finance and trade are for banks and consultants. Cultural intercourse is determined by television and the press, school and university travel, sport and, that most ubiquitous cultural diplomat, the tourist. No longer does nation need formal emissaries to speak peace unto nation.

Even where informal diplomacy does fall within the purview of formal institutions, those involved are multifarious. The British Council is supplemented (or complemented) by such bodies as the Royal Society, the Commonwealth Institute, the Central Office of Information, the Central Bureau for Educational Exchanges, the BBC, the Arts Council, the National Book League, even the Foreign Office itself. The last-named, smitten with guilt about the overseas student fees affair, has even set up a scholarship scheme of its own. All these organizations have their own international links, many of them duplicating those of the British Council. Cultural diplomacy is now hydra-headed.

So we have the paradox of an expanding, successful quango which none the less perceives that it is failing in its central task of promoting British culture abroad. I believe that the root of this neurosis lies in the Council's relationship with the Foreign Office. The Council's relationship with the Foreign Office dates from 1935, with an ill-concealed distaste for any area of overseas diplomacy operating outside its direct control. (The clasp from outside its direct control, the Council's "frightfully valuable" work is neither here nor there.) The Council has its own board and chairman, Sir David Orr, and a tradition of vigorous independence of ministers and their policies. Though priorities are discussed with the Foreign Office, the conduct of cultural diplomacy is firmly a Council matter.

Despite this, the Foreign Office must find the money each year to enable the Council to perform its "core" work. There is thus abso-

lutely no pressure operating on ministers or officials to protect this money. No grant in Whitehall is fixed in a less promising budgetary climate. It is a bit like expecting the wife to support her husband's mistress from the house-keeping. She will not kill, but will not strive officiously to keep alive.

The Council is today in danger of falling between two stools - and falling hard. Its much-trumpeted semi-independence may suit the *amour propre* of its officers but has left Britain's cultural diplomacy isolated from the rough and tumble of Whitehall and Westminster politics. No minister or political party gains kudos from lending it support. Yet despite being a political outsider, the Council must put up with all the negative aspects of Whitehall status. Its staff are subject to civil service conditions, secure but underpaid, immune from dismissal yet without performance incentives. Though agency work has made its offices abroad more project-oriented, they are still regarded as mini-embassies, representational outposts of some vague concept of Britishness.

This must change. Cultural diplomacy consumes almost a third of the Foreign Office budget (in grants to the British Council, COI and BBC external services), yet is treated as an activity peripheral to foreign policy. Instead, it should be brought to the centre of the diplomatic stage, as commercial work was in the 1960s. Policy and priorities for cultural promotion and exchange should be formulated with the Foreign Office for each embassy abroad. An ambassador should be given specific objectives in this field as in the commercial or political ones.

Were cultural diplomacy to revert to the Foreign Office, I am convinced that, far from neglecting cultural work, the Office would suddenly discover the need to give it greater prominence. Rather than tolerate the progressive demise of British Institutes, libraries, arts tours and educational visits, it would see them as integral to its local presence. Some of this work would be done by serving diplomats and the Council might lose posts to an expanded cultural attaché network. But this is precisely what is needed: more concentration on a currently underrated activity. As when commercial work was transferred from a separate service into mainstream diplomacy in the 1940s, cultural policy should be made an essential element in a diplomat's career structure.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Baldick is the author of *In Frankenstein's Shadow*, to be published later this year, and *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1840-1932*, which first appeared in 1983 and was reissued in paperback in September.

David Bindman edited *The Thames and Hudson Encyclopedia of British Art*, 1985.

Robin Briggs is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.

Brigitte Brophy's *Baroque 'n' Roll* and other essays appeared earlier this year. Archie Brown's most recent book is *Political Culture and Communist Studies*, 1985; he has also edited (with Michael Kaser) *Soviet Policy for the 1980s*, published in 1982. He is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford.

Peter Burke's *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe: Essays on perception and communication* was published this year. He is a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

Simon Burt's collection of short stories, *Floral Street*, appeared last year.

Lucas Campbell is a lecturer in the History of Art at the Courtauld Institute.

James Campbell's most recent book is *Gate Fever: Voices from a prison*, 1986.

David Carrier's *Artwriting*, a history of recent American art criticism, was published earlier this year.

Mark Ford is a tutor at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College.

Monica Furlong is the author of *Therese of Lisieux and Wise Child*, a children's novel, both published this year. Her earlier books include *Merton: A biography*, 1980.

Brian Harrison's *Prudent Revolutionaries* was published earlier this year. His other books include *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and change in modern Britain*, 1982, and *Drink and the Victorians*, 1971.

Christopher Hill is the Washington columnist of the *Nation*.

Anthony Hobson's books include *The Art and Life of J. W. Waterhouse 1849-1917*, published in 1980.

J. L. Houlden's *Resurrection of Jesus According to Matthew and Mark* was published earlier this year. He is Professor of Theology at King's College, London.

John House's *Monet: Nature into art* was published last year. He was Slade Professor at Oxford University in 1986-7.

Simon Jenkins's most recent book is *The Market for Glory*, a study of modern Fleet Street, published last year. He writes for the *Sunday Times*.

Marc Jordan's *Delacroix* will be published shortly.

Sally Laidr is the USSR Researcher for *Index on Censorship*.

Brian Morton is Features Editor of the *Times Higher Education Supplement*.

Conor Cruise O'Brien was a Minister and subsequently a Member of the Senate of the Republic of Ireland from 1973 to 1979. He was a member of the Irish Delegation to the United Nations from 1956 to 1960, and Representative of the Secretary-General in Katanga, Congo (now Shaba, Zaïre), during the crisis of 1961. *Representative of the Secretary-General* was published in August.

David Papineau's *Reality and Representation* was published in August.

Roy Porter is a lecturer at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London. His most recent book is *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1982.

Oliver Reynolds's new collection of poems, *The Player King's Wife*, is published this month.

Anthony Smith is the editor of *Florence Nightingale's Letters from Egypt: A Journey on the Nile, 1849-1850*, published last month.

Robert Service is Reader in Soviet History and Politics at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London. His books include *Lenin: A political life*, the first volume of which was published in 1985, and *The Russian Revolution, 1900-1927*, published in 1986.

Vincent Sherry is a Professor of English at Villanova University in Philadelphia.

George Szirtes's most recent book of poems is *The Photographer in Winter*, 1986.

THE TIMES Shot on the road



Peter Greenaway is the director and Joan Plowright one of the stars. The film is *Drowning by Numbers*, which Greenaway has just started shooting. Chris Peachment joined them in Southwold, where the whole picture is being made on location. His report appears next week.

... and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin on the way we live now, Frances Gibb on the law, John Clare on education, Jane MacQuitty on wine, Peter Ackroyd on books, Barbara Amiel's viewpoint, Paul Griffiths on music, Philip Howard on words, the humour of Mel Calman and Barry Fantoni, the unique *Times* crossword... and much more each week



THE TIMES
A lion among paper tigers 25p

Outside pressures

Anthony Hobson

FRIEDRICH ADOLF SCHMIDT-KÜNSMÜLLER
Die abendländischen romanischen
Blindstempeln
334pp. Stuttgart: Hiersemann. DM440.
3777285102

Quite suddenly, shortly before 1150, leather bookbindings began again to be decorated with small stamps impressed in blind. W. H. J. Weale, the first to notice these Romanesque bindings (so called, though they continued to be produced until the late thirteenth century) believed all or most of them to be English. Three studies by G. D. Hobson published between 1929 and 1938 corrected this assumption: he showed that the earliest examples were French and that the style had been disseminated from Paris. More recently, in *Gilded Books of the Bible and the Origins of the Paris Book Trade* (reviewed in the TLS August 16, 1985), C. F. R. de Hamel has given convincing reasons for associating a class of manuscript often found in stamped bindings with the twelfth-century Paris schools, the predecessors of the medieval university.

Friedrich Adolf Schmidt-Künsmüller does not dissent from these conclusions in his handsomely produced book, *Die abendländischen romanischen Blindstempeln*. Each binding is described and illustrated (alas, not always with equal clarity: comparisons often show a decline in photographic standards since the 1940s). The author provides a catalogue of the stamps used, each one illustrated from a photograph or rubbing. He deduces that most bindings can be attributed to ten French, English, German or Austrian workshops, though a substantial minority of individual specimens falls outside the major groups.

The earliest bindings were marvelously vigorous, both in ornament and design. Professor Schmidt-Künsmüller rightly stresses their resemblance to Islamic work – indeed there was nothing else to copy; 150 years had passed since the last Western blind-tooled leather covers – but his suggestion that Islamic 'influence' was transmitted through Spain is more doubtful. A traveller returning from the crusader kingdoms, always closely linked to France, could have brought back bound Arabic manuscripts and shown them to 'Prince Henry's first binder', the presumed originator of the style. Others were quick to imitate. A well-born French cleric, Hugo du Puiset, became Archbishop of Winchester in 1145 and Bishop of Durham in 1154. Blind-stamped bindings were produced in the former town about 1150 and du Puiset's four-volume Bible, still at Durham, was lavishly decorated in blind. There are examples from London, from the French provinces and Flanders, from Würtemberg and the Austrian abbey of

Lambach, though none from Italy or Spain.

The stamps used, mostly historiated, though in Germany often simply patterned, were very varied: beasts, birds and monsters from the bestiary, David and Samson from the Old Testament, Peter, Paul and the Last Supper from the New, God in a mandorla, elders with harps and vials full of odours, angels blowing horns and the dead rising from their graves, all from the Book of Revelation, Pisces and Sagittarius from the zodiac, palm trees and a medallion head from classical antiquity. Sometimes the stamps were combined to form a scene: a huntsman and hound pursue a stag; two warriors with clubs kneel to repel mounted knights; a cathedral stands in the middle of a city. But Schmidt-Künsmüller is severe about G. D. Hobson's diagrammatic reconstruction of a cover on which known tools are arranged to represent the apocalyptic vision, calling it 'a largely postulated Utopia'. He is himself mistaken, however, in saying that the nineteenth-century *reliques parantes* were the first attempts to match bindings to their contents. Scott of Edinburgh and at least one Venetian craftsman of the Renaissance had already tried to harmonize the outside with the text.

The author is more convincing when he argues that the Romanesque bindings were not considered cheap or of rough workmanship at the time. Many of those who owned or commissioned them were of high rank: several bishops, the Abbot of Weingarten, a royal prince, St Louis's mother. Some bindings have ivory or enamel fittings; the Weingarten Gradual in the Pierpont Morgan Library is set with a silver plaque inside a filigree border. He might have added that the large number of stamps on each of his main groups – far more than were used by Gothic or Renaissance commercial binderies – is a sign of private patronage. 'Prince Henry's first binder' owned sixty-three stamps; the du Puiset Bible is tooled with over 500 impressions of forty stamps.

Several problems remain. The many close variants of identical stamps used by the same shop imply a much looser organization than in later trade binderies. The author regards the Morgan Library Psalter as having the earliest gilt binding, but, as de Hamel has observed, the gilding looks suspiciously like a nineteenth-century embellishment, added when the book passed through the French trade.

Schmidt-Künsmüller lists 138 bindings, thirty-two more than by G. D. Hobson. There have been three losses, one binding destroyed in the Second World War, two manuscripts in an Austrian abbey rebound and the old covers thrown away. Even the latest list is incomplete, omitting volumes in Saint-Omer and Copenhagen, and a pair of early covers in trade ownership in the 1950s. Completeness may be unattainable. Meanwhile this corpus is a valuable, if costly, addition to the literature on early decorated bookbindings.

Safe in New Haven

David McKitterick

STEPHEN PARKS
The Elizabethan Club of Yale University and Its Library
284pp. Yale University Press. £35.
0304066938

At a time when private clubs are more often looking to their libraries to exchange books for cash, the Elizabethan Club at Yale may seem to be an anachronism: its library of early printed books, always of stellar first quality, is actually being added to. A couple of years ago the only known prop from the Elizabethan stage, a mock charter allowing Burghley to retire from public life, came to the shelves for the Club's seventy-fifth anniversary, and this had been preceded by much notable printed material.

The Club was founded by a Yale alumnus, Alexander Cochran, who presented the entire Shakespeare collection assembled by the nineteenth-century collector Henry Huth. Cochran was, apparently, only dimly remembered by his professors, and his bibliophilic enthusiasm lasted but a short while. Yet it was enough to prompt a succession of others. The result is the best conceived collection of

major Elizabethan and Jacobean literature anywhere in the world. This catalogue, by Stephen Parks, is the first proper one to have been published. It is also more: in its recording of provenances and, particularly, in an extensive introduction by Alan Bell, it documents an important strand in the history of Anglo-American taste – the survival and preservation of early editions of literary texts from the seventeenth century to the present day.

The activities of collectors like Henry and Alfred Huth, Frederick Locker-Lampson and Robert Heine, coupled with the work of binders such as Francis Bedford and Riviere in London, and of the Club Bindery in New York, affected the very survival of some books and influenced their modern appearance, as pamphlet volumes were broken up and call was replaced by polished Morocco. Mr Bell uses the words 'dapper' and 'dapper' of the Locker-Lampson books, and the same might be applied to many slim quarto sixteenth or seventeenth-century volumes. The Club's library may be unrivalled, but it is also the epitome of a particular kind of collecting. So though, though a book as this will certainly provide enjoyment, but it should also provoke reflection on the influence of taste upon historical understanding and the scholarly priorities of the last century and a half.

TLS LISTINGS

Archaeology

Throckmorton, Peter, editor. *History from the Sea: Shipwrecks and Archaeology*. Michell Headley. 240pp., illus. £14.95. 0 65533 614 5. 29/10/87.

Architecture

Borl, France. *The Monumental Era: European architecture and design 1929-1939*. Lund Humphries. 207pp., illus. £35. 0 85331 516 7. 19/11/87.

Art

Adams, Elizabeth. *Chelsea Porcelain: Harewood, Jenkins*. 224pp., illus. £30. 0 7126 1596 2. 29/10/87.

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